POETRY AND WISDOM

ELMER A. LESLIE

A Guide for Bible Readers

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A GUIDE FOR BIBLE READERS

Edited by Harris Franklin Rall

POETRY AND WISDOM

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ELMER A. LESLIE

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TO

My Sister

ANN JANE LESLIE

whose love for great literature and
whose collection of gems of wisdom
are sources of abiding inspiration

EDITOR'S PREFACE

THIS volume is intended to help the reader who wishes to know the Bible at first hand. The way to know a country is to visit it and travel through it, not just to read about it. But a good guide can help. He can lead to places of greatest interest and can give information needed for understanding what is seen. The Bible is a great and wonderful country. It is not one book but many books—books in which many voices join, and whose story stretches through many centuries. Its writings differ widely in character, as do the mountains and valleys, the rivers and seacoasts, the cities and plains, of a wide country like ours. At the same time, they have a real unity. They have one source, the Spirit of God moving upon the hearts of men. They have a living center, Jesus of Nazareth. We call the Bible the Word of God, and with good reason, for it comes out of the word which God spoke to these writers "by divers portions and in divers manners," and through it God speaks to us today.

All of us know some parts of the Bible quite well—a chapter here, a verse there, certain psalms learned perhaps in childhood, and some parts of the New Testament. But we all need wider acquaintance with the Bible, and truer understanding and larger appreciation of its wealth of moral and spiritual meaning.

This book is one of eight Guides planned for the purpose of leading to this broader knowledge. The authors have been chosen because of their training in Bible study and their experience in teaching. Four of the books are given to the Old Testament, four to the New. Many of the less

important parts of the Bible have of necessity been omitted. The Guides go with the reader on his journey through these writings. They stimulate interest and understanding. They introduce the writer and indicate the time, place, purpose, and special character of the writing. Chapter by chapter, they help the student to discover the meanings and values in the Bible, especially for the personal religious life. Since these Guides will be used largely by ministers, attention is given to material for sermons; but the lay reader will find them equally helpful. Each book is intended to serve for a six months' period. Four or five *Readings* should be completed each week.

Here are some *rules for Bible reading* whose observance will pay rich dividends:

1. Read with a definite purpose and expectation: to understand what is written; to gain quickening of thought and enlargement of mind and vision; to get personal help for good living; and, above all, to meet God and to hear his voice. These are great ends; whether they are reached will rest with each student.

2. Bring all that you have to your reading. What you get will depend on what you bring. Especially, bring a sympathetic imagination. You will not be reading dead words. They came out of life. Try to enter into that life of the past: into the faith of a psalmist and his trials and hopes, the appeal of a prophet speaking to a nation, the witness of Paul, the full heart of the Evangelists. Occasional reading aloud will help make the words live. Bring also an attentive and inquiring mind. Read slowly, pause, reflect, always seeking the real meaning.

3. Read in the spirit of prayer. Offer a prayer as you begin. Ask for the light which God's Spirit can give. Lift up your heart to God and ask God to come to you.

4. Read in the spirit of obedience. Ask what the passage means for your own life and pray for grace to follow what is thus revealed. "Apply thyself wholly to the Bible; apply the Bible wholly to thyself." (Bengel.)

In this course are frequent references to *ABC,* which means *The Abingdon Bible Commentary,* a commentary on the Old and New Testaments which contains many interesting articles on the Bible as a whole as well as an article on each book of the Bible. The purchase of this book is recommended to the lay reader, who will find it most interesting and helpful. For the minister who is studying these Guides it is indispensable.

The student will find that keeping a notebook from day to day as he reads will prove of great value.

HARRIS FRANKLIN RALL

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INTRODUCTION

THE books of the O.T. which are dealt with in this Guide, listed in the order in which they appear in the English Bible, are Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, the Song of Solomon, and Lamentations. Of these books, Psalms, the Song of Solomon (or the Song of Songs), and Lamentations are lyrical poetry—that is, poetry fitted to be sung to the lyre, "sweet lyric song" which expresses the individual emotion of the particular poet. These books of lyric song will be our first consideration. The books of Hebrew Wisdom are Job, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes; and they can best be read in that order. Of these, Job and Proverbs are written in poetry, while Ecclesiastes combines some poetry with rhythmical prose.

These books constitute to a remarkable degree the beauty of the O.T. They include two of the greatest books of world literature, the book of Psalms and the book of Job. The first of these is the world's noblest book of devotion, and the other is the masterpiece of Hebrew literary genius.

This, the fourth study of the series in the O.T. area, is arranged in 110 *Readings*. Fifty of these are based on the Psalms, six on the Song of Songs, five on Lamentations, twenty-six on the book of Job, seventeen on the book of Proverbs, and six on the book of Ecclesiastes.

The reader should begin this portion of his work by summarizing briefly in his notebook sec. 4, designated "Poems," in Professor L. B. Longacre's article "The Bible

as Literature," *ABC,* pp. 23-24. He should then read the more inclusive article by Professor A. R. Gordon, "The Poetic and Wisdom Literature of the O.T.," *ABC,* pp. 154-57, and summarize its main points in his notebook. These articles will explain the true nature of Hebrew poetry and the outstanding marks of Hebrew wisdom, and they also give the reader an over-all view of the material to be covered in this Guide. It is urgently recommended that the student follow the suggestions given throughout the Guide regarding the indicated readings in *ABC.* This *ABC* material will enrich his work and insure him the greatest pleasure, profit, and satisfaction from the time and energy thus employed.

Because of the large amount of biblical material which this Guide covers, some of the *Readings* may seem to the student unduly long. In such case, if his time is short, he should read carefully what he can, and then get a general idea of the remainder by more rapid reading.

It should be emphasized that this is a guide to the intelligent and fruitful *reading* of the sections of the O.T. which it covers. It will emphasize their religious worth and direct attention to the practical, devotional, and homiletical values of the materials read. Everything else, such as the historical and explanatory material, must be subordinated to this end. We are here primarily interested in the practical value of this literature today.

The student should use his notebook to set down from day to day valuable gleanings from his guided reading. This is voluntary work for the student's own eyes. In addition to this voluntary work, there are various assignments of required "Written Work," to be sent in to the examiner or instructor.

To students whose Bible reading under the direction of this Guide may awaken a desire for careful study of this

area of the O.T., I recommend Robert H. Pfeiffer's *Introduction to the O.T.* (New York: Harper, 1941), a book to which I am indebted at many points. This is an excellent supplement to the bibliography indicated in *ABC* in the introductions to the various books, and is particularly valuable in the area of the O.T. covered by this Guide.

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I

REVELATION ON WINGS OF SONG

Book I of Psalter. Psalms 1–41

THE book of Psalms composes the richest and deepest literature of devotion known to man. It gives a cross section of the soul life of the people Israel through a thousand years of their political and religious history.

We must ever be mindful in our reading of the psalms that they were set to music—music of the stringed instruments of lyre and harp, the wind instruments of trumpet and pipe, and the percussion instruments of timbrel and cymbal—and were intended to be sung. The Psalter is "a revelation on the wings of song" (John Sterling).

As we read the psalms as literature we should strive, by the reverent use of our disciplined imagination, to picture the psalm as being rendered in the worshiping congregation. Then we shall often hear the burst of praise by the full priestly choir in the Temple in the exalted moments of public worship. Again we shall hear antiphonal strains of partial choirs singing responsively one to another. And sometimes we shall be surprised by the devout strains from a single voice in solo pouring forth what some psalmist has seen and heard.

The reader should now turn to *ABC* and briefly summarize in his notebook the following sections from the introduction to "Psalms I-LXXII," pp. 509-15; "Significance of the Psalms," "The Terms 'Psalms' and 'Psalter,'" "Psalm Literature in the O.T. Before the Exile," "Psalm

Literature in Postexilic Judaism," "The Question of Davidic Authorship," "The Dating of the Psalms," "The Poetry of the Psalms," "Religious Values for To-day in the Psalms," "The Idea of God in the Psalter," and "Varieties of Religious Experience in the Psalter." He will then be ready to turn to the psalms themselves.

Reading 1: Psalms 1–5

Psa. 1 pictures the "two ways of life," and thus forms a fitting introduction to the Psalter. It describes a good man by what he does not do, and also by what he does do. The psalmist, moreover, is interested not only in contrasting good and wicked men here and now but also in contrasting the final outcome of the righteous and the wicked (vv. 5-6). This psalm could be the basis of a sermon on "Which Way Shall I Take?" Or one could build upon it a sermon of warning to youth on "Mastery by Degrees"—that is, "walking," "standing," and "sitting" with sinful men. Because of its interest in the question of God's rewarding or punishing a person in accordance with his conduct, it may be classified as a "Wisdom psalm."

Psa. 2 is a "king's psalm," the first of a group of psalms which concern the ruling monarch of Israel or Judah. The raging of the nations reminds us of the ravings of ruthless national leaders of our own time. But the Israelite king tells of a revelation that came to him from God on his enthronement day. It gave him the regal consciousness that he was God's "son," established in rule by God himself and destined to exercise a sovereignty world wide in its proportions (vv. 7-9). Outline in your notebook the spiritual qualities which you view as essential in kings, presidents, and leaders of nations today.

Psa. 3 is a lament because of personal enemies. Surrounded by these enemies, the psalmist throws himself upon the mercy of God. Note how in the very presence of

his enemies he is able to enjoy a refreshing sleep (vv. 5-6).

Psa. 4 is a song of trust. Note how the psalmist speaks first to God, appealing for his help (v. 1), next, in tone of lament, to the godless men who are humiliating him, and then with calm counsel to his fellow believers (v. 4), the inner circle of the loyal. Set down in your notebook how religious practices and attitudes (v. 5) bring joy (v. 7), physical refreshment, and security (v. 8) in times of stress and strain.

Compare Psa. 5, an individual lament because of ungodly enemies, with Psa. 17, to which it is similar.

Written Work.—Write out a sermonette of about two paragraphs based on Psa. 3:5, developing the subject "The Relation of Prayer to Refreshing Sleep."

Reading 2: Psalms 6–8

Psa. 6 is a lament of an individual because of sickness. The psalmist expresses the view, commonly held in his day, that sickness is an evidence of sin. Note that vv. 2, 3, 6, and 7*a* give glimpses of the nature of his illness, while vv. 7*b*, 8, and 10 describe his outer situation, beset by evil-intentioned enemies. An exclamation often found in such laments, and a mark of them, is the question of v. 3. See the result of his prayer (vv. 4-5) for healing and for restoration to God's merciful forgiveness (vv. 8-10). Set down in your notebook a sermon outline on "Our Prayer-Hearing and Prayer-Answering God," noting (vv. 8-10) God's response to his tears, his supplication, and his prayer.

Psa. 7 is a lament of an individual because of personal enemies. Compare it with Psa. 3. Note the opening cry for protection against his enemies (vv. 1-2) as the singer protests that he is innocent of any unfair dealings toward them. At v. 6 the appeals to God to "arise" and to "awake for me" are characteristic expressions in a lament. In v. 9 the psalmist practically quotes from Jer. 17:9. Set down in

your notebook in your own words the meaning of Psa. 7:15-16.

Psa. 8 is a nature hymn, a hymn of the night. Feel the beauty of an Oriental night suggested by the opening verse. See how the majesty of the night sky first humbles (v. 4), then exalts, the psalmist (v. 5). What are the qualities in man that are Godlike? Note in *ABC,* p. 519, how vv. 6-8 are related to the first chapter of the Bible.

Reading 3: Psalms 9–11

Psa. 9 and 10 originally formed one psalm and, taken together, present the first example in the Psalter, although incomplete, of an "acrostic" poem, every verse or section beginning with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet, taken in successive order. For other acrostics in the Psalter, see *ABC,* pp. 519*a,* 584*b*. This is a lament of an individual because of ungodly enemies. It opens with a glad burst of thanksgiving to Jehovah because a great victory over the nations (Psa. 9:5) has revealed him as King and righteous Judge of the world (vv. 4, 7-8). V. 9 provides a fine text for a sermon on "God Our High Tower," most appropriate for times of world-wide oppression and trouble. V. 10 is a good basis for a message on "The Dependable God," or "A God Who Does Not Let Us Down." Jehovah's mighty triumph over the nations (vv. 15-16), which their own evil acts had brought upon them, becomes a basis for the psalmist's personal appeal for help and recovery from personal illness (v. 13). A definite mark of a lament comes with the appeal to God now to "arise" to the protection of his "poor" or "meek" ones against godless enemies (v. 19).

But to the psalmist, God seems aloof, indifferent both to his cry and to the wicked who vaunt their atheism (Psa. 10:1-6). These godless men he vividly describes (vv. 7-11), then again (v. 12; cf. 9:19) he calls upon God to "arise

on behalf of his lowly worshipers and break the power of the wicked (v. 15). The psalm ends in the certainty of faith, the faith that his prayer has been heard and that the helpless will be protected by Jehovah (vv. 17-18).

Psa. 11 is a song of trust. Read *ABC,* pp. 519-20, for the situation in which the psalmist finds himself, noting the similarity of Neh. 6:11 to what we have here. What strikes you as true to life in the vivid description given in v. 2 of the wicked cunningly defeating and persecuting the upright? The very foundations of moral life are being destroyed by the skilled and efficient violence of evil men. Righteousness seems powerless. What can the righteous do? The psalmist asks the question only to answer it. *Jehovah* is not destroyed. High above the violent and the righteous he sits upon his throne, raining destruction upon the wicked and drawing the righteous into his protection (v. 1) and his fellowship (v. 7). There is a theme for a series of Sunday morning sermons in v. 3: "In Foundation-shaking Times What Can the Righteous Do?" This psalmist says, for one thing, they can just keep on doing what is right. What else, as it occurs to you, can they do?

Reading 4: Psalms 12–15

Psa. 12 is a national lament. Consult *ABC,* p. 520, for the situation from which the psalm springs. For a vivid picture of such times from what is probably the same century—fifth century B.C.—note Isa. 59:14-15. The lament opens in a cry for "help." See how it is the false, tricky, insincere, and irresponsible *speech* that is chiefly lamented (vv. 2-4). Suddenly comes Jehovah's answer to the lament. God, touched by the sighs of his children, gets into action, taking the side of his oppressed poor against their oppressors.

> Now will I arise, saith Jehovah;
> I will set him in the safety he panteth for [v. 5].

Conscious of the wonder of the comfort of this divine word of hope, probably spoken by a priest, the psalmist brings the psalm to an end in a hymn praising this divine word of promise (vv. 6-8).

Psa. 13 is a lament because of a personal enemy. Note the fourfold "How long" with which the lament opens. For this phrase also compare Psa. 74:10; 79:5; 89:46. Apparently forgotten by God and taunted by his enemy, the psalmist petitions God to restore his vitality and dignity (vv. 3-4). The verbs of v. 3 suggest a sermon on "The Cry of the Soul to God": "consider" me, "answer" me, "lighten" me. Right in the midst of what seems like God's neglect of him we see the triumph of his faith that God will surely deliver him (v. 5).

Read Psa. 14 under the guidance of *ABC*, pp. 520-21. Note the childlike conception of God which the psalmist gives, picturing him as looking down from heaven searching the earth for good men. Under the guidance of *ABC*'s interpretation of vv. 4-6, write in your notebook ideals you hold in your heart for religious leaders, and examine your life in relation to them. The closing verse shows that the psalm is a passionate New Year's longing for a change in the character of Israel's spiritual leaders. In what sense is a corrupt spiritual leadership a "captivity" (v. 7)?

Psa. 15 states what God requires of one who would worship him in the Temple in spirit and in truth. Note the responsive nature of the psalm: the question which was chanted by the worshipers at the Temple gate (v. 1) being answered by the officiating priest from within (vv. 2-5*b*) in a series of ten requirements. Examine your own spirit by the searchlight of this ancient "decalogue." The closing line of the psalm (v. 5*c*) is chanted by the entering worshipers. An inspiring call to worship could be drawn up from selected verses of this psalm.

Reading 5: Psalms 16–18

Psa. 16 is a song of trust. To this psalmist, God is the highest good (v. 2). He finds unique satisfaction in fellowship with God's people (v. 3), his contact with worshipers of other gods only making Jehovah and his people more precious (vv. 4-6). Memorize v. 6 and outline a sermon on it, noting that the "lines" mark out the "lot" which comes to him as an undeserved inheritance. V. 7*b* suggests a sermon on "A Helpful Use of Wakeful Moments," and vv. 8-9 offer an excellent basis for a practical message on "The Practice of the Presence of God." Note that the word rendered "glory" (v. 9) means "inner being." See *ABC,* pp. 521-22, on the meaning of vv. 10-11. The closing verse could be used helpfully as a call to worship.

Psa. 17 is a lament of an individual because of ungodly enemies who are unjustly persecuting the singer. He goes to the Temple in the clear consciousness of his own right living (vv. 1-5) and prays for God's protection against these enemies (vv. 6-9), one of whom (v. 13) is particularly prominent. Consult *ABC,* p. 522, for the meaning of vv. 13*c*-15. Note from vv. 3 and 15 that he spends the night, as was an ancient custom and as he has done before, in the sanctuary, hoping that in his deep distress during the night he will experience a revelation of Jehovah which will defend his innocence and bring calm and security to his soul. He has been kept from dealing violently with his enemies by God's word given to him by the priest at the sanctuary (v. 3). Here is a basis for a sermon on "The Prayer of Faith." The closing verse suggests a sermon on "Life's Deepest Satisfaction—Fellowship with God." Note the vivid contrast between the material interests of his enemies and the spiritual hunger of the psalmist (vv. 14-15).

Psa. 18 is a king's psalm of thanksgiving created for the

use of a Judean monarch (v. 50). Note the symbols which the psalmist uses for God: strength, rock, fortress, deliverer, shield, horn of salvation, and high tower. Outline in your notebook a sermon on "The Meaning of God for Our Life" based on vv. 1-2. See how there throbs in the words of vv. 6-8 the experience of praying in hours of distress. For vv. 7-15 consult *ABC,* p. 523. There is possible a sermon on "Divine Deliverance in Calamity" based on vv. 16-19. Face your own life with vv. 20-24 and see how it squares with them. In a hymn of praise that breaks out in vv. 31-42 there is a spiritual gem (v. 35) which emphasizes the protection, sustaining power, and gentleness of God. It is in vv. 46-50, which form a hymn of praise, that the nature of the psalm as a king's psalm becomes perfectly clear.

Reading 6: Psalms 19–21

Psa. 19:1-6 was probably originally an independent psalm. It is a nature hymn, a hymn of the day, with its primary interest centered in the sun. Note how day and night alike continuously declare their maker's praise. This psalm is the origin of the great hymn "The Spacious Firmament on High," by Joseph Addison, set to the noble strains of *The Creation,* by Franz Joseph Haydn. What aspect of God is praised in this hymn? Think of how we should practice the presence of God as we see the sun in its various phases throughout the day, silently declaring God's majesty, and as we gaze into the firmament which separates the heavenly from the earthly waters (Gen. 1:6). Picture the sun as in the imaginative conception of the psalmist it rises in the eastern horizon, travels to the zenith of the heavens, then sets in the west.

Psa. 19:7-14 also probably formed originally an independent psalm. It is a hymn of the Law. Write out in your notebook the quotation from George Foot Moore as given in *ABC,* p. 524. Note the seven terms used to describe the

Law. Compare the place which the Law of Judaism has in this psalmist's life (vv. 11-13) with its place in the life of the author of Psa. 1 (v. 2).

Psa. 20 is a psalm of the king, a prayer in the Temple before battle. Note how important in the psalm is the Temple—as a place where the king prays and as the "sanctuary" from which help comes. Zion is significant because the Temple is there, where whole burnt offerings and meal offerings are brought and where the nation's flags and banners are displayed. Think of vv. 6-8, the prophetic or priestly assurance of victory, as being spoken or chanted to the king. There is possible a sermon based on v. 7, appropriate to a time of war, on "The True Source of Victory in a Righteous Cause." Consult *ABC,* p. 525, for the correct force of v. 9.

Compare Psa. 21, another psalm of the king, with Psa. 20, to which it is similar.

Reading 7: Psalms 22–23

Psa. 22 is a lament of an individual which, although chiefly lament, moves on to the mood of triumph. Explain why this psalm is called by Christians the "Passion Psalm." Why does the psalmist appeal to the past (vv. 3-5)? Note the vivid description of the hostile treatment experienced by him (vv. 12-18). What, according to *ABC,* p. 525, does he mean by "my darling" (v. 20)? Note the change of mood in the psalm at v. 22. Feel the power of his testimony wherein he tells of his release from suffering (vv. 22-25). What is the value of public testimony in the congregation? Note the broadening scope at the close (vv. 27-31), where the worship of Jehovah on the part of the nations is described.

Psa. 23 is a song of trust which pictures Jehovah as the shepherd of the individual soul. Before reading this most beloved psalm of the Psalter, read Ezek. 34:11-16 and Isa.

40:11, which picture Jehovah as the shepherd of the *people* Israel. Then with these pictures fresh in mind, read Psa. 23 and note what Jehovah is represented as doing, in his capacity of shepherd, for the individual person. At v. 5 the figure of Jehovah as shepherd is changed to that of host. What does Jehovah as host do for the individual guest in his "house," the Temple?

Written Work.—Write out a brief paragraph on each of the following: (1) the impressiveness of this psalm as a piece of literature, (2) what it has meant and now means to your own experience of God, and (3) three points for a sermon on "The Protective Care of God."

Reading 8: Psalms 24–26

Psa. 24 is composed of three parts: (1) vv. 1-2, a hymn praising Jehovah as creator; (2) vv. 3-6, a ritual sung alternately between the laity and the priests, which is very much like Psa. 15 and which was sung at the entrance to the Temple; and (3) vv. 7-10, a hymn for the procession of worshipers, with the ark in their midst representing the presence of Jehovah of hosts, which was sung at the Temple gates. Read carefully what this psalmist views as Jehovah's requirements of a true worshiper. Which sounds the deeper note in religious experience, vv. 3-6 of this psalm or Psa. 15? Search your own spirit in the light of these expressed requirements. How do they compare with those expressed in Jn. 4:23? Picture vividly the scene implied in vv. 7-10. What element in the character of Jehovah is here exalted? How could you dramatize vv. 7-10 for a Sunday evening worship service?

Psa. 25, like Psa. 9 and 10 (see *Reading* 3), is an acrostic. It is a lament of an individual who is surrounded by personal enemies. He is a humble, God-fearing member of the congregation of Israel. In your notebook write out two verses of the psalm that would make good texts for ser-

mons, suggesting a sermon subject in each case. What verse in the psalm reaches you most deeply? In a manner quite familiar in the history of hymns, by the addition of a single verse (v. 22) the outflow of an individual soul's experience has been adapted for use in the congregation of Israel.

Psa. 26 is a lament of an individual falsely accused by ungodly enemies. The singer feels himself to be in peril of sudden death (v. 9). He stands accused, and comes to the Temple in honest consciousness of his own innocence to protest the accusation. From this point of view, vv. 3-5 are not an expression of Pharisaic righteousness but the solemn assertion of the psalmist's integrity. What glimpses of the ritual which was followed in such a Temple experience are given in vv. 6-12? Reread vv. 2-7 as the sincere prayer of your own heart. The last verse (rendered "groups" instead of "congregations") suggests that the payment of the psalmist's vow, in case he is declared innocent by the priest, will take place at one of the great festivals, where those who have come to fulfill their vows are arranged in "groups" according to the nature of their release, and the members of each particular group give their thanks together. Where does this psalmist most love to be?

Reading 9: Psalms 27–29

Psa. 27:1-6 was originally an independent poem, a psalm of trust, an outpouring of joyous appreciation of the Temple and its worship. Write down in your notebook just what God is to this psalmist (vv. 1-2). How does the psalmist meet fear? Outline in your notebook a sermon on "Living Above Our Fears," or some such title, based on v. 1. Notice what the psalmist derives from worship in the Temple. What do you think he means by "the beauty of the Lord" (v. 4*b*)? Reread these verses as giving utterance to the sincere outpouring of your own spirit, observing

that the keynote of the whole is the protection of God.

Psa. 27:7-14, originally a separate poem, as the arrangement in the A.S.V. (American Standard Version) suggests, is a lament of an individual because of personal enemies. This psalm, however, has one thing in common with Psa. 27:1-6 (cf. v. 8 with v. 4), the longing for firsthand experience with God, to seek his face, to behold his beauty. Think of the various ways in which we may seek the presence of God today.

Psa. 28 is a lament of an individual who was in mortal danger, surrounded by ungodly, deceitful enemies. Set down in your notebook what this psalmist found in God (vv. 1, 6-9). Note the change at v. 6 from a lament to a joyous prayer of thanks which reflects the psalmist's gratitude for a favorable answer to his prayer. Note in the last line of v. 7 the reference to the psalmist's *singing* his song of praise to Jehovah. Vv. 8-9 have adapted this original outpouring of an individual's soul to use in the Temple where the king worshiped, the "anointed" of Jehovah. It thus becomes a prayer for king and country.

Read aloud Psa. 29 as a nature hymn which describes the sevenfold peal of thunder in a rainstorm as "the voice of Jehovah" (*qôl Yahweh*). There are three areas pictured in the psalm: (1) vv. 1-2, the court of heaven, where divine beings bow in adoration before Jehovah; (2) vv. 3-9*a*, the physical world in which a storm, accompanied by thunder and lightning, sweeps across the Mediterranean to the Lebanon, then southward down along the whole length of Palestine to Kadesh; and (3) vv. 9*b*-11, the Temple where Jehovah sits enthroned, Lord of the once destructive "flood" of waters, sending it to his people now in prosperity-bringing winter rain. There his awe-struck worshipers exclaim, "Glory!" This psalm may well be utilized as a Scripture reading for a Sunday worship service which comes after a severe thunderstorm.

Reading 10: Psalms 30–31

Read Psa. 30 as a song of individual thanksgiving called forth by the psalmist's deliverance from a severe illness. It is rendered in the congregation in festal joy with singing and (v. 11) dancing. Note how the singer's recovery inspires the worshipers to join him in his thanksgiving (v. 4). Notice the pairs of words that are contrasted with one another in v. 5. In v. 12 instead of "my glory" read "my soul." According to the psalmist's thought, why did God heal him?

Psa. 31 is a lament of an individual because of ungodly enemies. What were these enemies doing (vv. 4, 6, 11-13, 18)? What was the psalmist's physical condition (vv. 9, 10, 12)? What association has v. 5 with Jesus? There is an undertone of trust in this lament and the rich realization of past blessings at God's hands. Notice that the psalmist's personal faith is undergirded by that of the congregation (vv. 19-20), and that the psalmist's own personal testimony after his deliverance from danger (vv. 21-22) encourages and enriches the spirit of the whole congregation (vv. 23-24). Remember in this connection the words of Augustine, "One loving spirit sets another on fire!"

Reading 11: Psalms 32–33

Psa. 32 is a song of individual thanksgiving for the forgiveness of sin. The serious and sane way in which this psalmist deals with the act of confession of sin has made him one of the most influential spiritual teachers of the Bible. What is the practical lesson which he gained from his experience of forgiveness? Note how the right to teach youth, full of abounding energy (vv. 8-9), is won only through his own experience of forgiveness.

Psa. 33 is a "new song" (v. 3) for the New Year celebration. There is a possible sermon on "Music in the Praise of God" in vv. 2-3. Notice how "a loud noise" means lit-

erally "a joyous shout." The "work of God" accomplished by his "word" was the creation of the world (vv. 4-9), a theme always emphasized at the Israelite New Year. But God's work is also done in the sphere of history (vv. 10-19), where not military might but trust in God brings deliverance. The psalm ends in the mood of trustful waiting upon God. The last three verses might well be used as the basis of a helpful sermon on "Waiting for God."

Written Work.—Outline a sermon on "The Gift of Forgiveness," basing it on Psa. 32:1-2, emphasizing the thrilling note of personal experience. Show how the terms used to describe moral offense express the richness of the psalmist's consciousness of pardon.

Reading 12: Psalms 34–36

Psa. 34 is a song of individual thanksgiving because of deliverance from illness (v. 20). It is a joyous testimony delivered in the worshiping congregation of the "meek." Note in *ABC*, p. 533, how v. 5 should be rendered as a part of that testimony. Outline briefly in your notebook a sermon on "The Laboratory Test of Religion," basing it on v. 8, "Oh taste and see," showing how we come to know God and his blessings by putting our faith to work. See how this psalm includes three elements: testimony (vv. 1-2, 4-6), invitation (vv. 8-10), and instruction (vv. 11-22). What, in this psalmist's judgment, should one do who desires to live long? Vv. 11-15 form an appropriate call to worship. This psalm, especially v. 3, is an excellent illustration of how, in public worship, the experience of the individual enriches and is enriched by the congregation.

Psa. 35 is a passionate prayer, a "Lament of an Individual." Compare it with Psa. 31, to which it is similar.

Psa. 36 is likewise a lament of an individual in peril of evil men (v. 11). The singer knows all too well how the evil within his own heart sometimes seems to say to him,

"Nobody will ever know. Your iniquity will not be found out" (vv. 1-2). But his nobler self sees clearly how false such suggestions are, and in contrast to this deceitful, earthy ugliness of sin he sees the towering mountains of God's righteousness. There is in mountains a lofty dignity, strength, and beauty that suggests the righteousness of God. There is basis in vv. 5-6 for a sermon on "The Nature of God," which would emphasize his loving-kindness, faithfulness, righteousness, and justice. What does the Temple worship mean to him (see *ABC*, p. 534, on vv. 7-9)? There is a sermon in v. 9 on "God the Fountain of Life and Light." Note how the psalm ends with the imaginative picture of these evildoers fallen and rendered powerless.

Reading 13: Psalm 37

Psa. 37 is a Wisdom psalm. It deals with the question of how God punishes evil and rewards goodness, a theme of great importance among the wise men of ancient Israel. This is in Hebrew an alphabetical poem in which the initial words of the twenty-two sections begin, respectively, with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet taken in regular order. The psalmist is more interested in God's reward of the trustful than in his punishment of the wicked. Read vv. 3-7 and take them home to your own heart, noting especially the verbs that challenge you at the innermost citadel of your soul: "trust," "do good," "dwell," "feed," "delight thyself," "commit," "rest," and "wait." What is the nature of evil (see *ABC*, p. 534) according to this psalmist? Note in v. 11 the source of a famous word of Jesus, Mt. 5:5. There is a sermon in vv. 23-24 on "The Stability of a Righteous Man." See how at v. 25 the psalmist suddenly enters upon a recital of what he himself has observed. Keep in mind as you read v. 25 that in the psalmist's day there were many beggars in Palestine. There is possible a sermon on "God Our Stronghold," based on vv. 39-40.

Reading 14: Psalms 38–39

Psa. 38 is a lament of an individual because of sickness. The psalmist had a severe skin trouble. To his physical pain was added his belief, shared by the rank and file of his day, that sickness was an evidence of the displeasure of God. Moreover, his spiritual suffering was increased by the fact that his relatives and intimate friends had turned against him. How does he react to their change of attitude (vv. 13-14)? How does he find relief? Notice that v. 18, his confession, forms the basis of the hope uttered in v. 15. In what sense can we say that God is our hope? Feel the emotional intensity of his closing words. There is a sermon on "The Cost of Loyalty to the Good" in these words of v. 20: "Because I follow the thing that is good."

Psa. 39 is also a lament of an individual because of sickness, uttered as an acknowledgment of sin by one who believes his sin to be the cause of his sickness. He is near death's door, very near. Note that in vv. 5-6 he passes from the sharp, painful knowledge of his own uncertain future to the wider thought of mankind as a whole and of the little that men achieve. Yet our psalmist is no pessimist. Wherein does he find a basis for hope? How important for our daily living is such hope? What does he suggest is the purpose of suffering (v. 11)? Vv. 12-13 reveal the genuine humility of the psalmist. The psalm closes with a lamenting appeal.

Reading 15: Psalms 40–41

Psa. 40 is composed of two originally independent psalms. Psa. 40:1-11 is a song of individual thanksgiving. The psalmist was near the "horrible pit" of the grave, but his patient cry for restoration had been heard of God and he had been restored to health. At the Temple, where "many" are gathered, he sings his "new song" of praise as

he glories in a God dependable in his just dealings (v. 4), generous in the expressions of his creative power (his "wonderful works")—the great thinker with whom no human being can be compared (v. 5). Read Jer. 7:22f. and notice how vv. 6-8 of this psalm show the psalmist to be in agreement with the prophets who emphasize the requirement of God as being obedience to his will, a requirement that he not only recognizes but accepts in his own heart (v. 8). So in the great assembly of the Temple congregation (vv. 9-10) he bears grateful witness that his restoration has its source in the righteousness, faithfulness, loving-kindness, and truth of God, and he prays that he may be kept continually by this great God.

Psa. 40:12-17 is a lament of an individual because of personal enemies whose destruction he passionately desires. The psalm ends in a pathetic appeal to God for swift action on his behalf. Vv. 1-3 might be the basis of a sermon on "He Set a New Song Singing." V. 8 suggests a sermon on "Finding Joy in the Doing of God's Will." And vv. 9-10 are a good foundation for a message on "Let Your Light Shine."

Psa. 41 is a song of individual thanksgiving. The psalmist had known the experience of a languishing illness. To his bodily suffering was added the hatred of deceitful personal enemies, one of them formerly an intimate friend, who hoped he would never recover. In his weakness and need he prayed God for recovery, confessing his sin (vv. 4, 10). He viewed his restoration to health as an indication that he had thus become acceptable to God. Notice that v. 3 suggests a message to the sick which may be entitled "God's Gracious Help to the Sick." There is a possible sermon in v. 12, "The Humblest Life Is of Concern to God."

Note that this psalm, which closes the first book of the Psalter, is followed by a doxology (v. 13).

II

ROAD MELODIES

Book II of Psalter. Psalms 42–72

Reading 16: Psalms 42–44

ORIGINALLY Psa. 42 and 43 were one psalm, a lament of an individual because of ungodly enemies. Note the classic expression in vv. 1-2 of the longing of the human soul for fellowship with God. Where did this psalmist feel that he would come into contact with God in unique measure? Picture to yourself the scene as described in v. 4. Read *ABC,* pp. 537-38, for vv. 6-7. How would you describe the inner spirit of the psalmist as revealed in the threefold refrain, 42:5, 11 and 43:5? What festival has the psalmist in mind in Psa. 43:3? How would he express his praise (43:4)? There is a good basis for a sermon in the refrain of these two psalms on the theme, "Conquering Our Moods of Depression."

Psa. 44 is a national lament which probably has as its historical background the slaughter of the Jews referred to in 1 Maccabees (in the Apocrypha) 2:29-38. The "I" and "my" of v. 6 and v. 4 stand for the worshiping congregation. After recalling how God's hand made possible for Israel the conquest of Canaan (vv. 1-3) and his confidence in the spiritual help of God in the present (vv. 4-8), the lament proper begins. Read in *ABC,* p. 538, the situation which gives rise to the lament (vv. 9-16). The theme of vv. 17-22 is a good subject for a sermon on "Loyalty in Desperate Hours." V. 22 probably reflects the "purge" carried

out by the Syrian king, Antiochus Epiphanes. Feel the passionate and desperate appeal that closes the psalm.

Reading 17: Psalms 45–46

Psa. 45 is a king's psalm. This psalmist sought to bring to a royal marriage a deeply religious quality, and he wrote his psalm in prophetic spirit with the desire to reach the mind and heart of the royal pair and (v. 2) to mediate to his monarch the blessing of God. Beginning with the praise of the king, it passes on at vv. 10-15 to counsel to the bride and a description of the bride waiting in the palace to be led, in accordance with Oriental custom, to her new home. The future posterity of the royal pair will bring fame to the king's name (vv. 16-17).

Psa. 46 is a Zion hymn which celebrates Zion, or Jerusalem, as the place where Jehovah dwells, the center of his world-wide dominion. The Chaldean captors tried to make their Jewish captives of 587 B.C. sing such Zion hymns for their amusement (Psa. 137:3). This psalm has an atmosphere of world catastrophe and crisis which makes it especially timely today. Its theme, given in its opening sentence and in the thrice-uttered refrain (vv. 7, 11, and, originally, after v. 3), is "God is our refuge and strength." First are pictured the ancient, inherited conceptions of a final world-embracing, terror-inspiring catastrophe (vv. 1-3); but Zion is secure, for Jehovah is there. Then, coming closer to historical reality, the psalmist pictures nations raging in final and decisive attack upon Jerusalem (v. 6; cf. Ezek., chs. 38-39). But they cannot master Zion, for there in his tabernacle (i.e., the Temple) dwells Jehovah, his unseen spiritual presence symbolized by the quiet, nourishing river which gladdens "the City of God." After each thought the worshipers take up the assuring refrain:

> Jehovah of hosts is with us;
> The God of Jacob is our refuge.

The might of pagan world powers becomes impotent at God's commanding voice (v. 6). The closing section of the psalm, vv. 8-11, introduces us to the beginning of the reign of peace when God, having finally ended war and weapons of war, from his exalted throne asserts his world-wide authority (v. 10):

> Be still, and know that I am God:
> I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.

The refrain is in each case the congregation's response to the hymn of the priestly choir. Outline in your notebook a sermon, based on v. 10, on "The Summons to Be Still."

Reading 18: Psalms 47–48

Read Psa. 47 as a hymn of the enthronement of Jehovah, under the guidance of the introductory paragraph of *ABC*, p. 540. Notice how v. 5 means that God has ascended his throne amid the acclaim of his worshipers. How far does the authority of Jehovah as king extend in this psalm? What great prophet emphasized Jehovah as king? Meditate on this subject: "What changes should I make in my life so as to be a loyal subject of the King of kings?"

Psa. 48 is a hymn of pilgrimage to Zion, sung at a festival of gladness. After the first three verses, in which Zion is praised as "the city of the great King" (i.e., Jehovah), the pilgrim witnesses (note the word "seen" in v. 8) a religious drama in which the marvelous spiritual power of the unseen King is represented as putting to utter rout the heathen powers which challenge God's rule. Then (v. 9) the pilgrim goes to the Temple. Observe what occupies his mind while he is in the Temple (vv. 9-10) and what he does when he comes out into the city itself (vv. 11-13). What quality in God seems to impress the psalmist most (v. 14)?

Reading 19: Psalms 49–50

Psa. 49 is a Wisdom psalm, which, like Psa. 37, deals with the question of punishment and reward. The problem that disturbs the psalmist is the prosperity of the wicked. He speaks as one who has been given insight by God for the teaching of others. In v. 4*b* the word "open" means to solve, and we should translate the entire line, "I will solve my riddle upon the harp," the psalmist here viewing music as a means of preparing his spirit for the revelation of God. The refrain of vv. 12, 20 (and originally after v. 4) was sung by the choir and means that men unillumined by the light of God are just like beasts. All men, rich and poor alike, experience death (v. 10), and no one can buy his way out of the hour when death will claim him (vv. 7-9). But the psalmist has been freed from the fear of death by his radiant conviction, expressed in v. 15, that God will not leave him in Sheol, the realm of the dead, but will "receive" him unto himself. Here is a sentence that faces toward a belief in immortality. In your notebook write a paragraph on this theme: "Through vital religious experience to faith in the immortality of the soul." This insight makes the psalm not only a wisdom psalm of instructions but also a subdued outpouring of personal thanksgiving.

Psa. 50 is a prophetic hymn. It opens with a majestic description of God shining forth from his Temple in Zion upon his worshipers and, as judge, calling his congregation together to deliver his sentence upon them. Compare vv. 2-3 with the similar passages which describe God's majestic revelation of himself (Judg. 5:4-5 and Hab. 3:3-6). Does God reprove his people for offering sacrifices to him (v. 8)? What elements in their worship seem to the psalmist to be missing (vv. 14-15)? Note the summary of the prophetic teaching of the psalm as it is expressed in vv. 14 and 23.

Reading 20: Psalms 51–53

Psa. 51 is a lament of an individual expressing penitence. Judging from vv. 2-4, how profound would you say is the psalmist's consciousness of sin? Read Ex. 12:21-22, then read Psa. 51:7, observing that this verse gives the words of the worshiper as they were uttered by him in the Temple ritual. Note the steps in the worshiper's experience suggested by the verbs "wash," "create," "renew," "restore," "uphold" (vv. 7-12). What does the psalmist desire to do (vv. 13-15) in relation to others who have transgressed even as he has done? What does this psalmist think more desirable to God than sacrifice and offerings (v. 17)? How interpret vv. 18-19 (see *ABC*, p. 543)?

Psa. 52 is a lament of an individual because of ungodly enemies. The psalmist has been falsely accused. Observe the conduct of these enemies (vv. 1-4), noting the particular area in which their sin is most evident. The psalmist employs vigorous figures of speech to describe God's destruction of them (v. 5). Feel the vivid contrast between vv. 7 and 8. Sense how significant to him are the Temple (v. 8) and his fellow worshipers. What does the psalmist mean by the comparison of himself to a green olive tree in the Temple courts (v. 8)?

Psa. 53 is practically identical with Psa. 14.

Written Work.—Outline in some detail a sermon based on 51:10 with some such title as "A Prayer for Spiritual Renewal." You might have in mind our need of such renewal, how it is wrought, and what it may do for us.

Reading 21: Psalms 54–55

Psa. 54 is a lament of an individual because of personal enemies. Godless and violent men are the psalmist's enemies, and they are seeking to take his life. As one who has been falsely accused, he comes to the Temple, seeking divine judgment and vindication as regards his innocence.

Feel the strength of his dependence in the crisis upon spiritual resources (v. 4). We see from v. 7 that his vindication has been accomplished and he has been cleared from suspicion of guilt. How does he express his thanksgiving (v. 6)? A sermon on such a topic as "Sources of Help When Dealt with Unjustly" would be of great value to many people and could appropriately be based on v. 4. This psalm should also be valuable to the minister who himself is frequently the object of sharp and unjust criticism.

Psa. 55:1-18*a*, 22 originally composed a separate psalm, a lament of an individual because of ungodly enemies. The leader among these enemies had once been the psalmist's intimate friend (vv. 13-14). Let your mind dwell sympathetically upon the psalmist's mental anguish and terror (vv. 1-5) and feel the poetically expressed longing to escape from the intolerable situation in which he finds himself (vv. 6-8). Feel the poignancy of his lament over a blasted friendship in vv. 12-14. Note that his enemy had once evidently been a religious man (v. 14). How does his anguished soul find relief (vv. 16-19)? There is possible a helpful sermon based on vv. 16-19 on the theme, "Where Can We Turn When Friendship Fails?" We rightly understand v. 22 as the counsel and assurance to the worshiper uttered to him by the officiating priest.

Psa. 55:18*b*-21, 23, also originally an independent psalm, is a lament of an individual because of a broken covenant of peace. See *ABC*, p. 544, for the difficult but interesting section of this psalm. Feel the brilliant portraiture of treachery in v. 21.

Reading 22: Psalms 56–58

Psa. 56 is a lament of an individual because of ungodly enemies. Note the psalmist's situation (vv. 1-2). Outline in your notebook a sermon on "Triumph over Fear," basing it on v. 4. Absorb into your soul the tender

thoughts of v. 8 and think of God's loving knowledge of us in life's most difficult experiences. A sermon on the theme, "If God Be For Us—!" (cf. Rom. 8:31), may be based on v. 9*b*. Observe in vv. 3-4 and in vv. 10-11 the refrain which was probably sung by the congregation. At vv. 12-13 the lament turns into a song of individual thanksgiving which implies that the psalmist has experienced deliverance.

Psa. 57 is a lament of an individual because of ungodly enemies. Explain the figure of speech "the shadow of thy wings," in v. 1. A sermon may be based on vv. 2-3 with the theme "Our Cry to the Prayer-Answering God." What is the meaning of v. 6? A sermon on "When the Heart Is Fixed in God" may be based on v. 7. In the light of *ABC*, p. 545, put in your own words the poetic thought of v. 8.

Psa. 58, which is a national lament over the corruption of justice in the earth, is similar to Psa. 52.

Reading 23: Psalms 59–62

Psa. 59 is a lament of an individual because of personal enemies. To what does the psalmist compare these enemies (vv. 6-7)? How does v. 13 suggest that the enemies were not Jews? Note the psalmist's confidence of his own innocence (vv. 3-4), which gives force to his lament. How does the tone of the psalm change in vv. 9-10? Outline briefly in your notebook a sermon on "God Our High Tower," based on v. 16, utilizing every line in the verse.

For Psa. 60, which is a national lament and includes, in the style of a divine oracle, an answer of triumph, consult the introduction to it in *ABC*, pp. 546-47, and compare it with Psa. 126.

For Psa. 61, which is a psalm concerning the king and at the same time the lament of an individual, see Psa. 63, to which it is similar.

Psa. 62 is a song of trust coming from the soul of a man

who had almost succumbed to sickness. Sense his picturesque description of his physical condition (v. 3). How would you characterize the spirit of his enemies (vv. 3, 9)? Note in vv. 1-2 and in vv. 5-6 the source of his relief and security in the midst of his physical and spiritual stress. To what does he summon his fellow worshipers on the basis of his own experience of God (v. 8)? Note how at v. 9 the psalm changes to a form of poetry of the Wisdom type, wherein, out of a definite revelation of God to his own soul (v. 11), he strives to teach the congregation to depend for protection and help solely upon God, who rewards every man according to what he does.

Written Work.—Set down in careful sentences how the psalmist comes in contact with God and what God means to his life in the stress and strain he is experiencing. Then outline a sermon on "Waiting for God."

Reading 24: Psalms 63–65

Psa. 63 is a psalm concerning the king. It is also a lament of an individual, and "one of the pearls of the Psalter." Compare v. 1 with Psa. 42:1. Why is thirst (v. 1) a fitting symbol of the soul's longing for God? Feel what the singer gains from his worship in the sanctuary (vv. 2-5). See how meditation upon God in the watches of the night gives him a consciousness of God's upholding strength (vv. 6-8). Note the vivid contrast between what God does for his soul (v. 8) and what his enemies are trying to do (vv. 9-10). The lofty spiritual trust of the psalmist achieves new force when we see how it arises in the midst of this perilous pressure of enemies. The psalmist's closing thought (v. 11), should be read as a prayer, meaning "May the king rejoice." It is on behalf of his king, who is the head of the Temple worship.

For Psa. 64, a lament of an individual because of ungodly

enemies, see Psa. 55:1-18*a*, 23 and Psa. 59, both of which it resembles.

Psa. 65 is a New Year's hymn of national thanksgiving. Note how the rendering of this psalm in the Temple is payment on the part of the congregation of vows made by Israelite farmers at the time of seed sowing. What does the psalmist gain through his worship in the temple (v. 4)? See how Jehovah has now become the source of confidence to far-off peoples as well as to Israel (v. 5). Note the theme of vv. 6-8, God as creator, and the theme of vv. 9-13, God renewing his creation; and note the appropriateness of such thoughts for a Palestinian New Year service. Pay careful attention to the lovely word pictures in vv. 9-13.

Reading 25: Psalms 66–67

Psa. 66 is a song of individual thanksgiving. The song itself begins at v. 13, but it is introduced first by a hymn of praise sung by the choir (vv. 1-7) and then by a national hymn of thanksgiving (vv. 8-12). All the earth is summoned to praise Jehovah. The theme of this hymn of praise is the mighty deeds of God which impress the pagan nations with fear (vv. 3-4). Note the reasons for national thanksgiving as enumerated in vv. 9-12. Vv. 10 and 12 seem to depend upon the words from the great prophet of the exile: Isa. 48:10; 43:2; and 51:23. In vv. 13-20 we have source material of great importance on the way in which an individual in ancient Israel paid a vow made to God in time of deep distress. What led him to fulfill his vow (vv. 19-20)? Where did he pay it (v. 13)? What offerings were a part of its payment (vv. 13, 15)? In whose presence did he give his testimony (v. 16) and what was the burden of it (vv. 17-19)? Write out in your notebook a brief paragraph on the value of Christian testimony.

Psa. 67 is a New Year hymn of national thanksgiving for a good harvest, as is clearly suggested in v. 6. Does v. 6

look backward to the past or forward to the future, or both? To whom does "us" in v. 1 refer? Note the relation which the interpretation of Israel's mission as stated in Isa. 49:6 bears to v.2. V.4, whic hemphasizes God as "judge," expresses a major theme which is associated with the celebration of the New Year. God is judge of all mankind in the sense that he is the one who determines their fortune and decides their fate.

Reading 26: Psalms 68–70

Psa. 68 viewed as a whole is a magnificent congregational hymn, made up of originally separate parts, which has been described as a "little textbook" of songs appropriate for the Israelite New Year festival. These songs give expression to a variety of themes which have their unity not in their relation to one another but in the *occasion* for which the several songs were composed, the festival which emphasizes the enthronement of Jehovah at the turning of the year. Among these songs several are particularly significant. With vv. 1-2 compare the ancient ritual of the ark (Num. 10: 35). Note the preparation for the "coming" of God to judge his people and give them release (vv. 3-6). Then comes the majestic self-manifestation of God as in ancient times he came to help his people; compare this passage with the classic description in Judg. 5:4-5. Observe the close relation between God's "coming" and the resultant material provision for his people (vv. 7-10). Vv. 17-18 describe the entrance of God in triumph into Zion, the center of his dominion and the place where he dwells. In the hymn of vv. 19-23 what aspect of God is most emphasized (note especially v. 19)? Read vv. 24-27 with imagination alert to picture what is here described; then consult *ABC,* p. 552, on these verses. In vv. 28-31 the psalmist thinks of the final era when Jehovah will be worshiped by all the nations. Feel the climax of the close, where in a

majestic, moving hymn (vv. 32-35) the psalmist calls upon all nations to praise Israel's God. Now read the whole psalm aloud. What impression does it leave upon you?

Psa. 69 is an individual lament because of ungodly enemies. The psalmist's ridicule of his enemies is aroused by his zeal for the Temple and such practices as fasting and the wearing of sackcloth (vv. 9-11). There is in this intensely individual lament a strong social sense of responsibility for the other members of Jehovah's congregation (v. 6). Note the sharp division of the community into parties, those who "wait for God" and who seek him (v. 6), and those who are without cause the psalmist's enemies (v. 4). In the psalmist's vow (vv. 30-32) do you think he *rejects* sacrifice and offering as something undesirable to Jehovah? Put in your own words what he believes is most pleasing unto God.

Psa. 70, a lament of an individual because of personal enemies, is practically identical with Psa. 40:13-17.

Reading 27: Psalms 71–72

Psa. 71 is an individual lament because of ungodly enemies. We should follow the marginal reading "me" instead of "us" in v. 20. There are three parts to this psalm, each beginning in lament and ending in triumph: (1) vv. 1-8, trust ending in praise; (2) vv. 9-16, lament ending in joy; and (3) vv. 17-24, thanksgiving ending in triumphant certainty. Is the psalmist young or old? What do vv. 11 and 20 suggest as regards his physical condition? Note how the psalmist describes his enemy (vv. 4, 10-11, 13). Observe how he thinks God can put his enemies to shame (vv. 12-13). He has a noble reason for his longing to recover and live (vv. 17-18). Note the significant acts of worship which he will perform when he pays his vow of thanksgiving (vv. 22-24).

Psa. 72 is a psalm concerning the king, a prayer of inter-

cession for the day of his enthronement. The verbs of vv. 1-11 should be rendered as the margin suggests, "Let him," or "May he," instead of "He will." Note in vv. 8-11 the prayer for world dominion of the Judean monarch. Is this thought related in any way to Isa. 49:6? What quality in Jehovah seems to justify the psalmist in this aspiration (vv. 12-15)? Vv. 16 and 17 should be rendered as a prayer, that is, "May there be" and so forth. Consider the appropriateness of this psalm as the basis of a sermon at the time of the installation of an American president. Note the emphasis on the national leader's righteousness, impartiality, gentleness, his championship of the oppressed and his consequent fame, which thrill the psalm.

The doxology of vv. 18-19 closes the second book of the Psalter. Compare this with the close of the first book, Psa. 41:13.

III

LYRICS OF WORSHIP

Book III of Psalter. Psalms 73–89

Reading 28: Psalm 73

PSA. 73 is a Wisdom psalm which, like Psa. 37 and 49, deals with the problem of the seeming prosperity of the wicked. The whole psalm is a prayer. Note that it begins with what is really the conclusion to which the singer's intellectual-spiritual experience has at length brought him. His experience began in profound spiritual insecurity and unworthy envy of the prosperous and arrogant wicked (vv. 2-9, 12). He saw how these worldly minded people influenced destructively Jehovah's worshipers (vv. 10-11). Although he had repeatedly performed the ritual of cleansing to attest his innocency of such conduct, he had not experienced God's blessing but, on the contrary, had suffered plague and chastisement all day long, day after day (vv. 13-14). Although racked by rebellious doubt, he kept his problem to himself until its very intensity drove him to the Temple (vv. 16-17). Write out briefly in your notebook in your own words the helpful thoughts which came to this wise man of Israel (vv. 17-22). After such thought there came to him a vivid awareness of God and a sense of permanent relationship to him which even death could not break (vv. 23-26). Put in your own words what the psalmist learned about God in this experience (vv. 23-26, 28; and his conclusion in v. 1).

Reading 29: Psalms 74–77

Psa. 74, like Psa. 44, is a national lament from the period of the Maccabees (c. 167 B.C.), when the Jews and Jerusalem suffered violent persecution under the Syrian ruler, Antiochus Epiphanes. The congregation laments their destroyed sanctuary (vv. 1-3) and all synagogues where Jews were accustomed to assemble (v. 8), now burned to the ground. All the holy symbols of the sanctuary are gone and the interpreting, comforting, and inspiring voice of prophecy is silent (v. 9). "How long" wails the psalmist (vv. 10-11).

In this dark hour what has the psalmist to say? Two things. First, to his people he cries, God is still king and as of old can wrest order from chaos, can put to nought the pagan Syrians (vv. 12-17). Second, he recalls God's covenant pledge to his own people, and in passionate entreaty cries, "Arise, O God" (v. 22). Write out in your notebook a paragraph in answer to this question: What has happened in Europe and Asia in recent history that makes such a psalm *live* today?

For Psa. 75, a prophetic psalm, see Psa. 81 and 95.

For Psa. 76, a Zion hymn, see Psa. 46, with which it has many points of similarity.

Psa. 77 is the lament of an individual. The psalmist describes his inner condition in the daytime, and in the night when he cries out to God (vv. 1-4). How does he seek relief (vv. 5-6)? Is it physical or mental pain that he suffers? Write out in your own words in your notebook his lamenting questions (vv. 7-9). Show how he resorts to what God did for Israel ("the deeds," the "doings" of Jehovah) as a basis of present comfort (vv. 10-15). The psalm closes with an emphasis upon God's presence with Israel *in the days of Moses,* manifest in storm, thunder, lightning, and earthquake (vv. 16-20). What lesson does this imply for the present hour?

Reading 30: Psalms 78–79

Psa. 78 is a historical hymn clearly intended for the edifying of the congregation (vv. 7-8). Observe how the story of Israel's past as transmitted by the fathers is viewed as a riddle ("dark sayings of old") which the poet sets himself to expound (v. 2). Compare vv. 5-6 with Deut. 4:9 and 6:6-7, and write in your notebook a paragraph on "The Strategic Importance of Religious Instruction." Vv. 9-11 refer to the fall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel (Ephraim), which had already taken place (c. 721 B.C.) The psalmist sees it as a warning to Judah. Note the outline of the great events in Israel's history as given in vv. 12-39. A second cycle of events is given in vv. 43-72, both of these illustrating God's dealings with Israel. What is the latest event in Israelite history dealt with in the psalm (v. 69)? Write in your notebook a brief paragraph on "the swing of the pendulum" between Israel's faith and obedience on the one hand, and its doubt and rebellion on the other. Write likewise a brief paragraph on "the swing of the pendulum" of God's dealings between mercy and salvation on the one hand, and judgment and chastisement on the other.

Psa. 79 is similar to Psa. 74.

Reading 31: Psalms 80–83

Psa. 80 is a national lament which had its origin in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. To the psalmist, "Israel" is Joseph, and includes the tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin, while Judah is not mentioned. In the singing of the psalm in the Jerusalem Temple, the refrain (vv. 3, 7, 14, and 19, to be rendered with the margin, "Restore us, O God of Hosts," and so forth) was in each case uttered by the congregation as a response to the priestly choir. Note the parts of this lament: (1) vv. 8-14*a*, an imploring petition contrasting Israel's promising beginnings —a vine brought out of Egypt--with the tragic present, its

protecting vineyard walls broken down, the "vine" plucked and ravaged; and (2) vv. 14*b*-19, a passionate final petition describing the desperate condition and imploring God's help. Outline a sermon for the Lenten season on the theme, "Restore Us, O God," basing it on the refrain of the psalm.

Psa. 81 is a prophetic psalm. Following a choir hymn of praise (vv. 1-5*b*), there comes the utterance of a message from God, needed at that hour, spoken by a single voice of one imbued with prophetic inspiration (vv. 5*c*-16), beginning "I heard a language." There are examples of such utterances from prophets in Amos 5:21-24 and Isa. 1:10-17, in which the prophetic teaching is spoken in connection with the public worship, a practice which at length had its influence in the creation of such psalms as this one. What musical instruments are mentioned in vv. 1-3? What kinds of vocal expression are also mentioned in these verses? What, in a word, is the content of the prophetic utterance of vv. 5*c*-10, especially v. 9? What attiude in Israel is most condemned in vv. 11-16?

Psa. 82, a New Year hymn, was sung just after the annual celebration of the enthronement of Jehovah and presents God as judge and determiner of the fortunes of gods and men. Compare it with Psa. 50, to which it is akin.

Psa. 83, a national lament which has in it a note far below the Christian spirit but which our times help us to understand, is similar to Psa. 137.

Reading 32: Psalms 84–88

Psa. 84 is a Zion hymn. The psalmist has earlier been a pilgrim to Zion; and now, far away from the Temple courts, he is homesick for the "dwellings" of Jehovah (v. 2). He is a poet, one of Israel's greatest, and he moves with easy grace from the symbol to the real. Nests where sparrow and swallow are perfectly at home suggest the Temple

altars where his spirit is most at peace. Highways along which pilgrims flock to Zion, the actual roads of Palestine, become to him symbols of those great highways of mind and heart that lead straight to God and to spiritual goals (vv. 5-7; cf. also Jer. 6:16).

The vividly remembered loveliness of the whole Temple area is behind the psalmist's exclamation with which the psalm opens (cf. Mk. 13:1). Feel his hunger for fellowship with the one active, spiritual Being of the universe (v. 2*b*). Was the psalmist familiar with the worship of dumb idols, that he so craves contact with the *living* God (v. 2)? How supremely happy the Temple servants who dwell in Jehovah's house, unceasingly uttering their praise (v. 4)!

Then swiftly the poet gives five marks of the true Zion pilgrims (vv. 5-8): (1) Their strength is in the spiritual realm. (2) In their hearts are the great highways (righteousness, justice, mercy). (3) They transmute tears into fountains. (4) They make steady though difficult progress. (5) They arrive at the goals of their pilgrimage—physical, Zion's Temple, and spiritual, the vision of God—and before their God they prostrate themselves in prayer. In v. 9 the words "our shield" and "thine anointed" are references to the Judean king. What may we infer as to the relation of the Judean king to the Temple worship? What seems to you the point of the comparison in v. 10? Note the five things that God means to this psalmist (v. 11) and set them down in your notebook. The last line of v. 12 is an exclamation.

As to Psa. 85, a New Year prayer for the turn of fortunes, see Psa. 14 and 126, to which it is similar.

Psa. 86 is a lament of an individual because of personal enemies (see vv. 7-14). In vv. 1-7 the psalmist describes his own condition. Notice what God means to him (vv. 8-10) and the attitude he takes to God (vv. 11-13). From v. 13 we infer that deliverance from the danger of death, the

lowest level of the underworld, has not yet taken place but the psalmist is assured of it. Sense the psalmist's deep desire for "face" in the presence of his enemies (v. 17), a concept familiar to the East. What kind of "token" does he pray for, and what does he expect from God (v. 17)?

Compare Psa. 87, a Zion hymn which glorifies Zion as the city of God, with Psa. 48; and Psa. 88, an individual lament because of sickness, with Psa. 38.

Reading 33: Psalm 89

Read Psa. 89 as a king's psalm. It is a national lament in which the king steps forth as the representative of the people. Begin to read the psalm, however, with the lament itself, which starts at v. 38. The psalmist here pictures the situation in which the present king, a Judean monarch of the line of David, finds himself. He feels rejected of God, his crown dishonored and his people humiliated. What has happened to the Judean fortifications (v. 40)? How has Judah fared at the hands of the enemies (vv. 41-42)? What was the outcome of the battle (vv. 43-44)? How does the psalmist suggest that the struggle has aged his monarch (v. 45)? Note the characteristic question of the lament in v. 46. To what quality in God does the psalmist appeal in vv. 47-48? In v. 50 we should read "thy servant," the reference being to the king. What seems to cut the king to the quick (vv. 50-51) is that he and his people have lost "face" before the other nations. What "former loving-kindnesses" had been pledged to "David" and his line (v. 49; cf. 2 Sam. 7:16)?

It is this lament that is the essential part of the psalm. But the psalmist gives passion and point to his petition to God and his appeal to him to intervene in two ways: First, as a prelude to the lament, he makes use of a hymn which had its origin in the Northern Kingdom of Israel and was originally sung by an individual. It glorifies the wondrous

deeds of Jehovah at creation when he broke the power of the stormy dragon of chaos (Rahab) and created the orderly world (vv. 8-12; cf. Psa. 74:12-17). Note the foundations of Jehovah's orderly and active rule of his creation (vv. 13-14). How do Jehovah's worshipers react to such rule (vv. 12, 15-17*a*)? Observe that Mount Tabor and Mount Hermon are referred to as ancient mountain sanctuaries, formerly Canaanite but now Israelite. It is upon Jehovah's strong rule and protection that the king, the nation's "horn" and "shield," depends (vv. 17-18).

Second, he follows this with another prelude which still more concretely strengthens the psalmist's appeal for help. He presents a version of the ancient promise of Jehovah to the Davidic monarch (see vv. 3-4, which rightly belong here, and vv. 19-37). To what pledge of Jehovah do vv. 3-4 refer (cf. 2 Sam. 7, especially v. 16)? Read in v. 19 with the margin "thy saint," a designation here for a Judean king (not David himself) of the Davidic line. Note the various things which this communication—originally spoken as a pledge in Jehovah's name to a reigning king—promised to him (vv. 21-29, 33-37). What would happen in case kings of the Davidic line, David's "children," should forsake Jehovah (vv. 30-32)? Now read again the lament, vv. 38-51, and note how these two preludes hold before Jehovah incentives for him to intervene in behalf of the king and his people. What do you think would be the influence of such a psalm as this upon a reigning monarch in Judah (note vv. 24, 28, 36)?

V. 52 is not a part of Psa. 89 but a doxology that closes the third book of the Psalter.

IV

HYMNS TO THE ETERNAL KING

Book IV of Psalter. Psalms 90–106

Reading 34: Psalms 90–91

PSA. 90 is a prayer of the congregation of Israel. It is a petition for release, not from some sudden stress, but from a persistent distress suffered by the Jewish community after the Exile. To whom do the words "our" and "we," used throughout the psalm, refer? What element in God does this psalm most emphasize (vv. 2-4, 7-9)? The congregation of Jehovah is suffering under the wrath of God because of their sins (vv. 7-11, 13, 15). How old is this psalmist, would you say, and what is the nature of his work (v. 17)? There is an excellent basis in v. 12 for a sermon appropriate to the last Sunday of the old year or the first Sunday of the new year on "The Harvest of the Years."

Psa. 91 is a profound spiritual utterance of confidence in Jehovah's protection. In Jewish literature it is called a "song for evil encounters." In late Judaism it was utilized as a charm against demons, such as night terror, pestilence, destruction, and against demon-possessed animals, such as reptiles, adders, young lions, and serpents (vv. 3, 5-6, 13). The psalm is an exalted priestly utterance to members of Jehovah's congregation who had become sick—attacked by demons, as they believed—and who were consequently suffering deep distress and social humiliation (v. 15).

The worshiper, in dire need, yet with his love set upon Jehovah (v. 14), comes privately to the priest in the

Temple and prays to God for relief and assurance. The psalm itself is the priest's pronouncement of Jehovah's blessing. There is first a *general* blessing upon all who trust in the Most High (vv. 1-2). Then (note in vv. 3-13 the change to second person) the priest addresses himself directly to the worshiper in trouble. In reassuring words that touch his specific needs, he promises him Jehovah's protection and blessing (vv. 3-13). The climax is reached with vv. 14-16, where God (through the voice of a second priest) speaks in the first person. In deep solicitude and in tender, wonderful promises, Jehovah pledges to his loyal one deliverance, restored honnor, and a long and prosperous life.

Written Work.—Write on one of the following:

1. First set down in your notebook what this Psalm suggests God can mean to a devout, trusting soul in sickness or need. Then outline a sermon on "Dwelling Under the Protection of God," utilizing especially vv. 1-2, 4, 9, and 15.

2. Write out in your own words in a single paragraph the content of the petition in Psa. 90:12-17; then state the impression which this psalm makes upon you.

Reading 35: Psalms 92–95

Psa. 92 is a song of individual thanksgiving. Note that it opens like a hymn of praise. Notice the praiseworthy elements in God which are mentioned (vv. 1-2). What musical instruments were evidently quite commonly used in the rendering of such a psalm (v. 3)? In vv. 4-11 the psalmist states what he has *himself* experienced from God (note "me," "I," "mine," "my"). What has the psalmist learned about God that workers of iniquity do not seem to know (vv. 5-9)? Read v. 10*b* in the light of Lev. 14:15-18 and explain the nature of the ceremony to which the psalmist refers. What has he experienced that makes him thankful (vv. 10-11)? How is Psa. 1 related to vv. 12-14? Observe how his own experience of what God has done for him is

to be made of social value (vv. 4, 10, 15). There is a fine sermonic suggestion for Old Folks' Day in the church in v. 14: "The Continuing Inspiration of Mature Christian Character" or "On Growing Old Inspiringly."

In the light of the introductory paragraph to Psa. 47, to which this psalm is similar, read Psa. 93 as a hymn of Jehovah's enthronement. Render the opening cry as: "Jehovah is become king!" What are the (spiritual) robes of the newly enthroned King and what has his enthronement meant to the world (v. 1)? Note the implied struggle between Jehovah and the storming, destructive "floods" of the primeval "deep" (Gen. 1:2) which issued in Jehovah's triumph and made the creation of the world possible (vv. 3-4). Note how in v. 5 the psalmist pictures the newly enthroned King as in control, his laws ("testimonies") dependable and effective. What is the quality which the psalmist sets forth as required of Jehovah's Temple congregation? Take this challenge home to your own soul.

Psa. 94, a national lament because of ungodly enemies, was sung by the Temple congregation (v. 5).

Psa. 95, like Psa. 81, is a prophetic psalm. It begins with a congregational hymn of praise (vv. 1-7*b*). Note the two summonses to praise (vv. 1-2; v. 6). Which is the deeper in mood? Note the qualities in God which are praised in vv. 3-5, and those named in the first two lines of v. 7. Then suddenly there breaks in a single voice from a prophetic-minded psalmist who, as Jehovah's representative, speaks a solemn message of warning. What is the burden of his message to the congregation in vv. 7*b* (beginning "Today") to 11? Outline a sermon on the theme "God Is Speaking Today," basing it on this prophetic part of the psalm.

Reading 36: Psalms 96–102

Psa. 96 is a hymn of the enthronement of Jehovah closely related to Psa. 47 and 93. The annual ceremonies of the

enthronement of Jehovah called forth "new" songs (v. 1; cf. also Psa. 98:1, a new song for the newly enthroned king at the beginning of the new year). The enthronement cry comes not at the beginning, as in Psa. 93:1; 97:1; 99:1, but in the heart of the psalm (v. 10), as in Psa. 47:7*a* (reading "For God is the King of all the earth"). "Jehovah reigneth" is rightly interpreted to mean that the ceremony of enthronement has *just now* taken place. This ceremony, performed annually, must have been an effective means of religious instruction, serving this end somewhat as do our church ceremonies in celebration of Christmas and Easter. It taught the *present meaning* and strategic worth of the religious idea that Jehovah is King. Thus, every year, Jehovah's lordship over Israel was lifted into central emphasis.

But does the enthronement of Jehovah have only national significance (vv. 1, 3, 10)? Note the three basic themes which enter into the praise of the newly enthroned king: (1) his power of salvation, (2) his glory—that is, the essence of his being—and (3) his wonderful deeds, especially the creation of the world (vv. 2-5). To the Israelites the New Year was the time when Jehovah renewed the world and there began then a new series of his creative acts.

At v. 6 is pictured a procession which was part of the ceremony. Observe the separate acts of the worship which the psalm accompanied: praise, sacrifice, and prostration before Jehovah (vv. 7-9). See the forceful picture of nature's jubilation over the newly enthroned King, and feel the power of this imaginative poetry (vv. 11-13). What aspect of Jehovah's kingship is emphasized in v. 13?

For Psa. 97, 98, and 99, hymns of the enthronement of Jehovah, see Psa. 96, to which they are similar.

Psa. 100 celebrates the entrance into the Temple of worshipers bearing a thank offering. Who are summoned to praise (vv. 1-2)? Note that the theme of praise is intro-

duced by "Know ye." What are the three reasons here mentioned why Jehovah should thus be thanked (v 3)? Put in three statements the invitation of the officiating priest to the pilgrim worshipers (v. 4). The psalm ends with a new and yet deeper statement of reasons for the praise (v. 5). What are these three deeper reasons? Read Lev. 7:11-14 as explanation of the ceremony of the thank offering which the psalm introduced.

Psa. 101, a king's psalm, should be compared with Psa. 72 and 110, to which it is similar.

Psa. 102 is an individual lament because of sickness. The title of the psalm, "A prayer of the afflicted," and so forth, finely expresses its nature. Describe the psalmist's physical condition (vv. 3-5). In v. 7 read "I am wakeful" for "I watch." What is his social situation that increases the singer's distress (v. 8)? What is his spiritual condition that makes his condition yet more distressing (vv. 9-11)? Observe where he turns in his personal frailty for comfort and assurance (vv. 12-22). At v. 23 begins a new cycle which includes a lament (vv. 23-24) and a comforting assurance (vv. 25-28). In what aspect of God does the psalmist find comfort (vv. 25-28)?

Written Work.—Write out a brief discussion in two paragraphs of the following question: What is the message which the psalms of Jehovah's enthronement—Psa. 96–99—have (1) for me personally, (2) for the church I serve?

Reading 37: Psalms 103–105

Psa. 103 is a psalm of individual thanksgiving. Most hymns summon the psalmist's fellow worshipers to praise. Wherein does this psalm differ (v. 1)? Note how this psalm rises from the benefits experienced by the psalmist himself (vv. 2-5; "my soul," "thine iniquities," etc.) to blessings experienced by the nation (vv. 6:14; "righteous acts" to "the children of Israel," "we," "us"), and finally mounts

from the nation to humanity (v. 15; "man"). What had the psalmist himself experienced from God? What had God done for Israel in the classic era of Moses? What in God's revelation to Moses in Ex. 34:6 most impressed the psalmist (vv. 7-8)? What element in God's dealings in Israel's history most moved him (vv. 9-14)? State the contrast between fragile, perishing human life, on the one hand, and God on the other (vv. 15-17).

Where, in the view of the psalmist, is Jehovah's throne (v. 19)? Does this psalm impress you as more primitive or more advanced in thought than the psalms of Jehovah's enthronement? Note that there are four groups who are to participate in the song of praise to Jehovah (vv. 20-22). Write down in your notebook in a single paragraph the chief reason for praise which this psalm has awakened in your soul. One can helpfully preach this whole psalm for a service of Thanksgivng.

Psa. 104 is a nature hymn. The author is a great poet. See how he pictures God as creator of the heavens (vv. 2-4). Compare vv. 5-9 with Psa. 93:3-4, and observe the "struggle" of God at creation. In vv. 10-18 the psalmist tells how the once destructive watery "deep" was transformed by Jehovah into springs and valley streams. Show the psalmist's consciousness of the relationship that exists between the physical world and the life of birds and animals (vv. 10-13). What famous Egyptian hymn seems to be known to the psalmist, as revealed in vv. 20-23 (cf. *ABC*, p. 575)? How do sun and moon serve the divine purposes? For v. 26 we should read, "There go the terrible monsters," of which leviathan was the greatest, for to the psalmist the sea was an unfathomed mystery. What attitude does he pray that God may have toward all his creation (vv. 31-32)? What changes do you see in the psalm beginning at v. 33? Note that by "my meditation" (v. 34) the singer means his poem, the psalm itself. Compare v. 34 with Psa. 19:14,

where for "meditation" a different term is used but the thought is similar.

With Psa. 105, a historical hymn, compare Psa. 78, to which it is similar.

Reading 38: Psalm 106

Psa. 106 is a national lament. It is just such a supplication as is uttered in the prayer of Solomon in 1 Kings 8:47-53. Put the situation described in King Solomon's prayer in your own words. This psalm is then a prayer of general confession for captives from Judah who are aware of the successful restoration of the Judean community in Palestine but have not been permitted to share in its joys.

The psalm begins with a song of thanksgiving (vv. 1-3) for the prosperity of the returned community in Palestine. Then, in vv. 4-5, we see how unfavorably the lot of these captives compares with that of the Jerusalem community, and we hear their cry that Jehovah might intervene. What indications are there in vv. 4-5 of the degree of prosperity enjoyed at the time by the Jerusalem Jews?

Then comes the confession from the lips of the captives (vv. 6-46), opening in a profound consciousness of sin (v. 6), and telling the story of Jehovah's past dealing with his people (vv. 7-46) in such a way as to awaken confidence that he will again intervene on their behalf. There is implied a present appeal to God on the basis of what he has done many times in the past. State in a sentence for each what is referred to in the following verses: (a) 7-12, (b) 13-15, (c) 16-18, (d) 19-23, (e) 24-27, (f) 28-31, (g) 32-33, (h) 34-42. What do vv. 43-46 imply as regards the present need of the captives? How is v. 47 related to vv. 43-46?

The fourth book of the Psalter, like the first three books, closes with a doxology (v. 48). Compare with this Psa. 41:13; 72:19; and 89:52.

V

TRAILS TO JERUSALEM AND TO GOD

Book V of Psalter. Psalms 107–150

Reading 39: Psalms 107–109

PSA. 107 is a song of individual thanksgiving. The scene for the rendition of such a psalm takes shape before our eyes. The rendering of the psalm was but a part of the complete expression of thanks. There were held in the Temple great common thanksgiving celebrations, especially, as is the case in this psalm, at the Feast of Booths, where those who in various crises had been saved and helped by Jehovah were arranged in groups and together presented appropriate offerings and rendered the pertinent part of the psalm. Such groups are referred to in Psa. 26:12: "In the *congregations* [rendered *"choirs"*] will I bless Jehovah"; and in Psa. 68:26: "Bless ye God in the *congregations.*" The term used in each case refers to "groups" within the celebrating whole, those who had vows of thanksgiving to render being grouped according to the nature of the deliverance each had experienced. The four most frequent groups were caravan merchants who had got lost in the wilderness (vv. 4-9), prisoners (vv. 10-16), the sick (vv. 12-22), and seafarers (vv. 23-32). The officiating priest from the steps of the forecourt would sing the first line of Psa. 107, "Oh give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good," the whole assembled congregation answering in the familiar worship response, "For his loving-kindness endureth forever." Again the

priest would intone vv. 2-3, which would be followed by the same response. Then the priest would call for each of the four groups in turn. The choir would sing the experience of each group, its distress, its cry from the depths of need, and Jehovah's answering help (vv. 6, 13, 19, 28). The priest would summon each group, one after the other, to praise Jehovah because of his ever-ready help: vv. 8-9, 15-16, 21-22, and 31-32 (meaning "Let men praise Jehovah," and so forth).

Note that the psalm closes with a hymn (vv. 33-42) which implies the thought that each experience of deliverance thus celebrated is but a concrete illustration of what God has done for his people over and over again in Israel's long history, and will continue to do. Why do vv. 33-38 seem appropriate for the Feast of Booths? What relation does such a psalm have to the experience of social Christian testimony? What reasons have you for personal thanksgiving? This psalm is an excellent basis for a concrete type of thanksgiving sermon, with v. 2*a* as the text. Another sermon theme is pertinent, "The Cry out of Desperate Need" (vv. 6, 13, 19, 28).

Psa. 108, a national lament, is made up of parts of two psalms—57:7-11, corresponding to 108:1-5, an individual lament; and 60:5-12, corresponding to 108:6-13, a national lament.

Compare Psa. 109, a lament of an individual because of ungodly enemies, with Psa. 9 and 10, to which it is similar.

Reading 40: Psalms 110–115

Psa. 110 is a king's psalm composed by a psalmist of prophetic spirit for a Judean monarch, to be sung as a message from Jehovah at the time that he was anointed king. What two powers had the Oriental monarch in antiquity (vv. 2, 4)? The Judean kings based their priestly claims on their being legitimate successors of the ancient

Jerusalem priest-king Melchizedek (Gen. 14:17-20). V. 4 seems to represent a protest against a dangerous lust for power on the part of the priesthood at the time of the psalmist. The king is like a young god of light born on the holy mountains from the womb of the dawn (v. 3). How is he designated as the legitimate ruler (vv. 1-2, reading, with the margin, "scepter" for "rod")? Observe that his rule centers in Zion (v. 2). The presence of Jehovah at his right hand is to give the king assurance of victory (v. 5). Note how the psalm ends with the picture (wild, barbaric war poetry) of the king as judge among the nations, his head uplifted in honor and in courage. What would be the effect upon a monarch of such prophetic assurance?

With Psa. 111, a song of individual thanksgiving, in alphabetical arrangement, compare Psa. 34, to which it is similar.

Compare Psa. 112, an alphabetical Wisdom psalm, with Psa. 1, which, although not alphabetical, is similar to it.

Compare Psa. 113, a congregational hymn of praise, with Psa. 117, which is similar to it.

Psa. 114 is a historical hymn. Why is it appropriate for the celebration of the festival of the Passover? Read the psalm aloud, giving three stresses to each line, but four to the first line of v. 7. Sense its charming childlike quality. Then write down in your notebook your impression of it as a poem. Note the poetic treatment of history which the psalm gives. To what events is reference made in vv. 1-4 (cf. Ex. 19:18; Judg. 5:5)? Why was nature thus set atremble by these events (v. 7)? To what does v. 8 refer? What is the psalmist trying to teach his people by this poetic treatment of history? Write in your notebook what this psalm has to say to America today.

Psa. 115 is an outstanding example of a responsive hymn of praise. Vv. 1-2 were sung by the congregation, vv. 3-8 by the priestly choir, and vv. 9-11 were rendered respon-

sively, the first line of each verse being sung by the priestly choir, the second by the congregation. The priestly blessing, vv. 12-15, was chanted by the priests, and vv. 16-18 were sung by the congregation. The psalm accompanied the act of sacrifice which the priests proclaim as accepted of Jehovah. To what element in God does the congregation of worshipers appeal (vv. 1-2)? Note how the psalmist emphasizes God as the *living, working* God (vv. 3-8). What qualities in God lead the congregation, the Levitical choir, and the priests to trust him (vv. 9-11)? Render the priestly blessing (vv. 12-15), "May Jehovah be mindful of us; may he bless us," and so on. Does this psalmist have any faith in the immortality of the soul (vv. 16-18)? Compare Psa. 88:4-5 with v. 17.

For your notebook work out from this psalm a responsive service of worship, designating the sections to be rendered respectively by the congregation, the choir, and the minister.

Reading 41: Psalms 116–118

Psa. 116 is a song of individual thanksgiving. Note the simple yet complete content of this psalmist's testimony in vv. 1-2. Observe that in vv. 3-8 and 11 he tells us about his severe illness and recovery. What grade in society did he represent (v. 6)? Outline in your notebook a sermon on "A Threefold Deliverance," basing it on v. 8. Compare v. 9 with Isa. 38:19 and note how precious life is to the psalmist. Observe his description of the ritual acts whereby he pays his vows (vv. 12-14, 17-19). In such a psalm of individual thanksgiving we are at the fountain sources of Christian testimony.

Psa. 117 is a congregational hymn of praise, one of the little gems of the Psalter. Whom does the psalmist summon to praise? Who is meant by "us" in v. 2? What two qualities in God most impress the psalmist? What is the relative im-

portance of those qualities in the character of God as the prophets understood it?

Psa. 118 is a song of individual thanksgiving. Notice that vv. 1-4 are rendered responsively by the choir and the congregation, and mark in your Bible the parts most likely taken by the choir and the congregation, respectively. Observe the psalmist's experience as given in vv. 5-18. It may be that it is a king who is here speaking (v. 10). Picture to yourself the vivid festal scene at the Temple door as implied in vv. 19-21. What is the meaning of the proverb in v. 22? Feel the lofty, stirred mood of the psalmist that is implied in vv. 22-25, as he pays his vow of thanksgiving and prays for future blessing. Vv. 26-27*a* are sung by the choir of priests who welcome the worshipers as they enter into the Temple. V. 27*b*, a direction to the worshipers after they have entered the Temple, was probably given by the leader of the Levitical choir. It is likely that this verse refers to the solemn procession of the worshipers bearing palm branches (see Mt. 21:9). These worshipers utter their thanks and the psalm closes, as it began, with the beloved responsive ritual between priests and worshipers (vv. 28-29). Write a paragraph in your notebook, with this psalm in mind, on the individual's need for congregational worship.

Reading 42: Psalm 119

Psa. 119 is a hymn in praise of the Law. Judging from v 108, what was this extensive poem intended to be in relation to Jehovah? This is the most extensive of the alphabetic psalms. There is a section for each of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and the opening letter of each of the eight-line sections, respectively, is the same. Judging from section "Aleph," what do you consider the purpose of the psalm? Write down the separate terms given in "Aleph" to designate the Law. What purposes other

than this main one may have moved the psalmist to write such a psalm (v. 53)? Read the first paragraph on "The Scribes," in *ABC*, pp. 455-56, in order better to understand Jewish feeling for the Law in the days after the exile. Read each of the twenty-two sections and underline in your Bible one thought from each that comes as a message to your own soul. Check on the margin of your Bible twelve verses that suggest to you the values of Bible study. After reading this psalm turn to *ABC*, p. 524, and read again the words of G. F. Moore regarding "the cornerstone of Judaism" (cf. Psa. 19:7-14). Copy in your notebook the next to last sentence of the paragraph beginning "The conception generally held by Christians concerning the Law."

Reading 43: Psalms 120–122

Beginning with Psa. 120, each of fifteen successive psalms is designated "A Song of Ascents." The term "ascents" means the festal "going up" in procession to the sanctuary. "Ascent" here is used in an extended meaning and stands for the whole festival (Tabernacles), the main and distinguishing feature of which was the sacred procession. Some of these psalms, originally independent, were utilized for this group and were given a new interpretation with the congregational needs in mind.

Psa. 120 was originally an individual lament because of personal enemies. Note the nature of the psalmist's enemies (vv. 2-4). Read with the margin in v. 4, "coals of broom"—that is, roots of the broom bush which are burned by Bedouins and which give an intense heat. Read v. 5 as figurative language, not as a description of geographical localities. The singer is exposed to the ridicule and abuse of wicked men. He wails out his longing for protection and defense (vv. 5-7). Outline in your notebook a sermon on "Finding God in an Unsympathetic Environment," basing it on this whole psalm.

Psa. 121 is the heartfelt supplication of an individual soul for divine help. Toward all the mountain sanctuaries of Palestine the worshiper gazes as though wondering whence divine help may come. Where does his hopeful glance at length rest (v. 2*a*)? What aspect of God gives him assurance of help (v. 2*b*)? In vv. 3-8 (note the change to the second person) we have the voice of the priest uttering to the worshiper the assurance of Jehovah's blessing upon the man who seeks his help at Jehovah's "mountain." Observe the various ways in which Jehovah helps the needy soul (vv. 3-4). Note how central is the thought of Jehovah's worshiper as being *kept* in God's care. In how many verses of this psalm does "keeper" occur? There is possible a sermon based on this whole psalm on "Kept in the Care of God."

Psa. 122 is a Zion hymn, composed by a pilgrim to the Temple at Jerusalem just at the point of his departure to his home (read in v. 2 with the margin "have stood"). He recalled the moment when he was first invited to make the pilgrimage. In what mood did he receive the invitation? What had Jerusalem come to mean to him as a result of his pilgrimage (vv. 3-5)? Put in your own words his prayer for Jerusalem's peace, keeping in mind that "peace" means "soundness" and "welfare." There is a sermon possibility here on "The Note of Gladness in Our Worship" (v. 1).

Reading 44: Psalms 123–125

Psa. 123 is a national lament. Note the similarity of the opening of this psalm to that of Psa. 121. What mood shines forth in the eyes of the congregation as they look toward Jehovah? Note the situation in which Jehovah's people find themselves (vv. 3-4). There is possible a sermon based on v. 2 on the theme, "Looking Toward God." What is in *your* eyes as you "look unto Jehovah" today?

Psa. 124 is a hymn of national thanksgiving. Observe the conditions faced by the people of Israel before the help of Jehovah came (vv. 2-7). Through what pictures does the psalmist describe the distress which Israel was then experiencing (vv. 3-4)? Through what pictures does he portray release (vv. 6-7)? Note how the closing verse brings the lesson of this past experience into present reality. See how his God is to the psalmist the active and powerful creator.

Psa. 125 is a national lament, as the petition in vv. 4-5 shows. Yet because of its wonderful expression of trust in God (vv. 1-2) and confidence in his ultimate help, it may likewise be viewed as a national song of trust. Note the two beautiful pictures the psalmist uses to express his deep confidence in Jehovah, comparing the first with Psa. 46:5 and the second with Zech. 2:5. Do you see how v. 3 pictures the political situation of Israel? Feel how pertinent is the thought of v. 3*b* for our time, when there is the temptation for righteous men to deal with the foreign forces occupying their territory in pagan and even evil spirit, losing their patience and their faith in God's purpose. The psalmist's faith gives hope that sustains him in dark hours. Notice the two clearly defined groups in the Jewish community to which the psalmist refers (vv. 4-5). Read in v. 5*b* "May Jehovah lead them forth," and so on. V. 4 is a prayer, passionate and intense. Only from God can his people receive such treatment as they deserve. All depends upon God. The last line of v. 5 is the response of the congregation.

Reading 45: Psalms 126–129

Psa. 126 is a prayer of the congregation for the turn of fortunes in Israel. It is a New Year prayer. We should render v. 1, "When Jehovah turned the fortunes of Zion," and v. 4, "So turn our fortunes, Jehovah." Why is this

psalm appropriate in connection with the New Year celebration? Note the joy because of what Jehovah has done over and over again in the past, a joy made the more radiant because it lifted Israel in the eyes of the nations (v. 2). Observe what the nations say of Israel and what Israel acknowledges for itself (v. 3). Feel the intense longing in the prayer of v. 4. As if in divine response to the prayer comes by single voice the utterance of thoughts of comfort and hope in the form of a proverb (vv. 5-6). What is the psalmist trying to say to Israel in these words? See the beautiful picture that is painted in these closing verses.

Psa. 127 is a psalm tinged with Hebrew Wisdom. The first part (vv. 1-2) has the same thought, practically, as Prov. 10:22 (read with the margin). Note how vv. 1-2 protest against a kind of workmanship that represents worried, anxious, strenuous toil which has in it no calm and trustful dependence upon God. Read Mt. 6:24-34 as a N.T. expression of the intended teaching. What is needed is certainly not idleness or feverish strenuousness but work without undue exertion, accompanied by a constant sense of co-operation with God (v. 1). We should read the closing line of v. 2 as follows: "So much (i.e., the needful bread for life) he gives to his beloved in sleep." The thought is similar to the teaching of Jesus given in Mk. 4:26-28. Vv. 3-5 of the psalm contain another wise saying which emphasizes the reward of virtue. What does the presence of children in a home signify to this psalmist? What does v. 4 mean? Put the thought of v. 5 in your own words. V. 1 offers a fine basis for a sermon for Labor Sunday on the theme "Dependence on God in Our Daily Work."

Psa. 128 is a psalm tinged with the Wisdom temper, and emphasizes, in a vein similar to Psa. 127:3-5, the reward of virtue. Picture in your imagination the psalmist's description of the happiness of a good man in his family (vv. 2-4).

Where, in unique reality, does Jehovah dwell (v. 5*a*)? How does the close of the psalm emphasize "the social mission of a happy home"?

With Psa. 129, a national lament, compare Psa. 83, to which it is similar.

Reading 46: Psalms 130–132

Psa. 130 is an individual lament expressing penitence. What kinds of "depths" may have been in the experience of the psalmist? How does he picture God's responsiveness to his cry of pain (v. 2)? What for this psalmist is the chief quality in God (vv. 3-4)? Observe how rich and suggestive is his experience of "waiting" for Jehovah. Note that in vv. 7-8 he teaches the congregation of Israel what he has learned in his own experience. What word in v. 8 would you emphasize as most important in the psalmist's mind?

With Psa. 131, a psalm of trust, compare Psa. 23, to which it is similar in mood.

Psa. 132 is a psalm concerning the Judean (Davidic) king. The opening verses (1-5), which were spoken by the Judean king, seem to contain an echo of a legend about King David which we do not possess—a legend which told of a vow uttered by him to "the Mighty One of Jacob" that he would not enter his house, or lie upon his bed, or sleep at all until he had found a dwelling place for God. Vv. 6-7 give the report of the spies who went out to search for the ark. They got some word of it at Bethlehem (Ephrathah). Setting out from there, they found it at Kiriath-Jearim (note marginal reading for v. 6; "Jaar" is an abbreviation of Jearim). Read 1 Sam. 7:1-2 and 2 Sam. 6:2 (Baale-judah is the same as Baalah or Kiriath-Jearim, Josh. 15:9). The people intend to "bring it" (so read with the Greek) to the Temple (v. 7). We are here in the atmosphere of sacred drama in which the ark plays a central part. Israel-

ites, who represent the spies that went to hunt for it, utter v. 6. The processional throng cries out jubilantly (v. 7). Vv. 8-10 describe the procession with the ark, the priests fittingly arrayed and bearing it, chanting the ancient song of the ark (Num. 10:35). The worshipers (saints) shout in jubilation, the king dancing before it, as did King David centuries before (read 2 Sam. 6:12*b*-21). The prayer is offered for the king (v. 10). A single voice on behalf of Jehovah utters a promise, assuring posterity to the Davidic line (vv. 11-12; read 2 Sam. 7:12-17 and 2 Chron. 6:16), and to Zion, the nation's capital, the permanent home of the ark and the spiritual center of Jehovah's people (vv. 13-14). Both laity, however poor, and priests will enjoy the fruits of Jehovah's blessing upon Zion (vv. 15-16). The Davidic line of kings will flourish in might, in light, and in triumph over the enemy (vv. 17-18).

Reading 47: Psalms 133–136

Psa. 133 is an utterance of Hebrew Wisdom, as the introduction, "Behold, how good," and so on, clearly shows. What is it that seems such a pleasant thing to the psalmist? What is the point of the comparison of this to the anointing oil poured on the priesthood (Aaron and his sons; read Ex. 29:7 and 30:25, 30)? What is the point of the second picture, the flowing down in dew of the perennial snows of Mount Hermon? Observe how "there" in v. 3 refers back to wherever brethren dwell together in unity. Note the blessing upon such which comes at Jehovah's command.

Psa. 134 is a night hymn preparatory to the seven days of the Festival of Tabernacles and especially as a preparation for the ministering priests. The high priest summons the priests, servants of Jehovah, to exercise their exclusive function of blessing, to which summons the priests respond (vv. 1-3). What message does this little psalm of the priest-

hood have for you as a leader of public worship?

Compare Psa. 135, a congregational hymn of praise, with Psa. 115, to which it is similar.

Psa. 136 is a congregational hymn of praise to be rendered responsively, the first line in each case by the priests, the second by the congregation. Read Psa. 107:1; 118:1-4; 1 Chron. 16:37-41; and 2 Chron. 20:21, and picture in your mind the living worship portrayed. What are the two major themes of Psa. 136 (vv. 4-9 and 10-25)?

Written Work.—On the basis of Psa. 133 outline in some detail a sermon on "Church Unity." You might consider the idea of unity and fellowship in churches and denominations. Point out evils to be overcome, the kind of unity to be achieved, and the ways in which this may be brought about.

Reading 48: Psalms 137–142

Psa. 137 is a national lament, which was probably composed for, and rendered at, the Fast of the Ninth of Ab, commemorating the destruction of the Temple. What great event in Jewish history forms the background of this psalm? What does v. 3 teach us as to the reputation the Jews had among the Chaldeans for their Temple songs? Why did they refuse to sing (vv. 2, 4)? What did Jerusalem mean to this psalmist? What would Christianity have to say about the spirit of vengeance displayed in vv. 7-9?

With Psa. 138, a song of individual thanksgiving, compare Psa. 66, to which it is similar.

Psa. 139 is also a song of individual thanksgiving. This psalm is rich in the view that God is present everywhere in the universe and knows everything that can be known. From this angle it is "the greatest gem in the Psalter." Note the distinctive way in which the psalmist expresses the first of these conceptions (vv. 1-6) and picture in your imagination the second (vv. 7-12). What particular aspect

of God's creative activity does he emphasize in vv. 13-16? Read in connection with vv. 13-16 the similar thought of Job 10:8-12. For the "book" of v. 16, compare Ex. 32:32; Psa. 69:28; Mal. 3:16; Phil. 4:3; and Rev. 20:12; 21:27. Note the significance of the individual thoughts of God the thinker (vv. 17-18). Probably vv. 19-20*a* originally belonged after Psa. 140:11, and vv. 21-22 after Psa. 141:4 (Buttenwieser), which arrangement leaves Psa. 139 one of the loftiest of the entire Psalter. Read the hymn of Harriett Beecher Stowe, "Still, Still with Thee," which is based on this psalm. Write out the outline of a sermon on "The God-examined Life" based on the five great verbs of vv. 23-24. Let these words, which sum up the practical teaching of the psalm, search your own spirit.

With Psa. 140, an individual lament because of ungodly enemies, compare Psa. 52, to which it is similar; and with Psa. 141, another individual lament because of ungodly enemies, compare Psa. 142.

Psa. 142 is an individual lament because of personal enemies. Where is the psalmist when this psalm is composed (v. 7)? What is his problem (v. 6)? How does he feel deep down in his spirit (vv. 3, 6)? What makes his lament so acute (v. 4)? In the crisis God is to him a refuge (v. 5). Note the burden of his petition to Jehovah (vv. 6-7). Note the friendly attitude toward the psalmist of the righteous in the community (v. 7). Outline a sermon in your notebook based on v. 3, with some such theme as "God Knows and Cares." Meditate on the help that comes to us as individual Christians through the interest and assistance of other Christians (v. 7).

Reading 49: Psalms 143–146

Psa. 143 is an individual lament because of personal enemies. What is the problem of the psalmist (v. 3)? Observe the progressive persecution suggested in v. 3, with

the intended issue in his death. How does he describe his feelings (v. 4)? Upon what does he meditate for comfort (vv. 5-6)? Note also Psa. 77:12; 44:1. Notice the concrete petitions in Psa. 143:7-12. Which impresses you as the noblest, and which as the most ignoble?

Psa. 144:1-11 is a king's psalm and also an individual lament. In v. 10 the term "David" means the present king of the Davidic line. For similar prayers of Davidic kings read 2 Chron. 14:11 (Asa); 2 Chron. 20:6-12 (Jehoshaphat); 2 Kings 19:15-19 (Hezekiah). What is God to the composer of this psalm (vv. 1-2)? Note how the psalmist implies that even the king, with his people subdued and loyal, is but a mortal man with fragile hold on life (vv. 3-4). Note how the petition of vv. 5-8 means "Manifest thy presence, O God, against the enemies." What does the psalmist pledge himself to do in case of victory (vv. 9-10)? What is the burden of his petition (v. 11)?

Psa. 144:12-15 was originally a separate psalm. It is a psalm tinged with the Wisdom temper, dealing with God's reward of virtue. Write out in your notebook this enthusiastic description of Judean society when the blessing of God rests upon it, noting especially the beautiful figures of speech in v. 12. Paraphrase v. 14. Notice that v. 15 is really an exclamation which means:

> Oh, the happiness of the people for whom it is so!
> Oh, the happiness of the people whose God is Jehovah!

On the basis of v. 12 outline in your notebook a sermon to young men and women on the theme "When Youth Deserves the Blessing of God."

Compare Psa. 145, a song of individual thanksgiving, with Psa. 103, to which it is similar in thought, although Psa. 145 is an alphabetic poem.

Psa. 146 is a song of individual thanksgiving. Note the pure song of praise with which the psalm opens (vv. 1-2).

From vv. 3-4 what may we infer was the attitude of the prince in authority over the Jewish community at the time? Note how in v. 5, as over against trust in a faulty human lord, he directs the community, in the temper of the sages of Israel, to dependence upon God. What in God and his general dealings is there that leads the psalmist to give such counsel (vv. 6-7*b*, lines beginning "Who")? Note how the next five lines (vv. 7*c*-9, beginning with "Jehovah") deal with his loving care to the needy. Sense the different groups of the needy ones whom Jehovah helps. The close of the psalm is a cry of triumph. This psalm is the first of the five "Hallelujah" psalms with which the Psalter comes to its close, the beginning and end of each being "Praise ye Jehovah."

Reading 50: Psalms 147–150

Psa. 147 is a hymn of national thanksgiving. Notice the three invitations to praise: vv. 1, 7, and 12. Judging from v. 2, at approximately what time may we date this psalm? Note the vivid contrast between vv. 3 and 6 on the one hand and vv. 4 and 5 on the other. What is the major theme of vv. 7-11? Put in your own words the thought of vv. 10-11. From vv. 13-14 how would you estimate the economic condition of the psalmist's community? Note again the swift transition from winter to spring in vv. 15-18. Explain the transition from God's law in nature to God's law in Israel (vv. 19-20), his unique gift to his people.

Psa. 148 is a congregational hymn of praise to be rendered responsively. This hymn has been called "a masterpiece of religious hymnody." What are summoned to praise Jehovah from the heavens (vv. 1-4), and why are they to praise him (vv. 5-6)? What is it in nature that is summoned to praise him (vv. 7-10), and who among men (vv. 11-12)? Note how the universal reign of Jehovah is implied in v. 11. The kings are to praise him for what he has done

to Israel, for it is Israel's unique nearness to Jehovah through which God's light comes to them (v. 14; compare Isa. 49:6).

With Psa. 149, a New Year's hymn, a new song for the newly enthroned king, compare Psa. 96, with which it has points of similarity.

Psa. 150 is a hymn of national thanksgiving. Why is this psalm appropriate for the close of the Psalter? In what two places is Jehovah to be praised (v. 1)? Why is he to be be praised (v. 2)? What musical instruments are to be used in his praise (vv. 3-5)? Write out in your notebook a catalogue of Hebrew musical instruments as mentioned in this passage—which reflects the highest development that Hebrew music attained in accompaniment of the singing of psalms—dividing them into string, wind, and percussion instruments. Comment on the significance of v. 6 as the climax of the Psalter.

Written Work.—Write out a careful paragraph summarizing what you have gained from the reading of the psalms under the directions of this Guide.

VI

LYRICS OF LOVE

The Song of Songs

THE complete title of this book appears in the opening verse, "The Song of songs, which is Solomon's." The phrase "the song of songs" is a Hebrew way of expressing the superlative and means "the loveliest song." Solomon is mentioned six times in the book, and in the third chapter the "bridegroom" is identified with King Solomon. Solomon is credited with the authorship of 1,005 songs (1 Kings 4:32). It is this, together with the repeated reference in the book to King Solomon, which probably prompted the editor of the book to ascribe its authorship to him.

We rightly understand the book as a collection of love songs. Some of these *could* have originated as early as the time of Solomon. But the collection as it exists has many linguistic features that indicate a later date. Aramaic words such as mark the latest O.T. books, Ecclesiastes and Esther, abound in the Song of Songs. The term used in Songs 4:13 for "orchard," or (margin) "paradise," is a Persian word; and that used in 3:9 for "palanquin," or (margin) "car of state"—that is, the covered carriage, borne on the shoulders, in which a person is conveyed—is a Greek word. These facts point to a date for the book after Alexander the Great (333 B.C.) but not later than about 250 B.C.

The presence of this largely secular book as an accepted

part of the O.T. Scriptures is due to the allegorical interpretation that was given to it. It was the prophet Hosea who blazed the trail for O.T. allegory—the description of one thing under the image of another—through his representation of Jehovah and Israel as husband and wife. Following this method of interpretation, Rabbi Akiba, who died about 132 A.D., supported the Song of Songs as authoritative sacred literature and maintained in exaggerated partisanship that "the entire age from the beginning until now is not worth as much as the day on which the Song of Songs was given to Israel!" The Christian Church took over from Judaism this allegorical method of interpreting the book but viewed the "bridegroom" as representing Christ and the "bride" as his church. The chapter headings of the A.V. (Authorized, or King James, Version) embody this type of interpretation. Such allegorical interpretation, however, misses the rare beauty and charm of the book, and has been quite generally abandoned.

Most illuminating suggestions for the interpretation of the book have come from J. G. Wetzstein, who for many years was Prussian consul in Damascus. He has described vividly from life as he saw it in Syria the wedding ceremonies and festivities as carried on among the peasants. The day before the wedding the bride dances a sword dance to the rhythm of a song sung by those present which describes her ornaments and her bodily charm. During the week following the wedding night, the bridal couple are celebrated as "king" and "queen." Rustic seats set up on the threshing board serve as the "throne" for the "royal" pair. In this "royal" week numerous songs are sung, some of which are eulogies of both the bride and groom. Songs of this type are found in the Song of Songs, along with other love lyrics of various sorts.

When this book is thus read as a collection of Palestinian love songs, we are afforded vivid glimpses into the folk life

and the lyric soul of Israel. We feel the warmth and intensity of the love of a man for a maid and of a maid for a man. And in verses of unforgettable beauty these songs reach their climax in a lyric that portrays the exalted reach of love beyond the power of death to destroy (8:6-7).

Reading 51: Song of Songs 1:2–2:7

SONGS AND REMINISCENCES OF THE BRIDE

In Songs 1:2-8 the bride sings the longing of a maid for her beloved. How does she designate him (v. 4), and in the light of Wetzstein's suggestion how are we to interpret this word? Note, as a typical Oriental touch, the comparison of love to wine and fragrant oil (v. 3). What is there in the character of the king that inspires love (v. 4; read "rightly," with margin, "in uprightness")? From vv. 5-6 we learn that the maiden has the social status of peasant (see *ABC,* p. 623). How does she describe herself? Notice the interesting comparison of her comeliness to the draperies of the palace of Solomon. Her brothers had set her at the menial work of taking care of the vineyards and she had neglected her beauty. Note the possible application of the principle expressed in v. 6*c* as a warning to the minister:

> They made me keeper of the vineyards;
> But mine own vineyard have I not kept.

Meditate on this theme: "Keeping the Vineyard of My Own Soul."

How does her lover answer her question as to where he feeds his flock (vv. 7-8)? Observe the gracious manner in which the two lovers address one another.

In Songs 1:9–2:3 the bridegroom and bride sing to one another. To what does the groom compare his mate (v. 9)? To what three things does the bride compare her groom (vv. 12-14)? On the basis of vv. 12-14 outline a sermon to

young people on "The Fragrance of Pure Love." Read 1:15 and 2:1 as sung by the groom, and 1:16-17; 2:1-3 as sung by the bride. To what does the groom here compare his bride (2:1)? What is the point of her comparison of him to an apple tree (2:3)?

Reading 52: Song of Songs 2:8–3:5

THE SERENADE OF THE BRIDE AND HER DREAM

The maiden tells that one night in spring the lover serenaded his beloved (2:8-17). She saw him come leaping down the mountain, skipping over the hills. The region implied is probably the Lebanons. To what animals is the lover compared (v. 9)? Note that it is his beloved who looks out of her windows and glances through the lattice at him (see *ABC*, p. 624) as he finally stands just outside the wall. His serenade to his beloved is a lyric of loveliness (vv. 10-14).

The author knew and took delight in the Syrian landscape, and in vv. 11-13 has given us a brilliantly beautiful and accurately described picture of springtime in Syria. Write out this description in your notebook in your own words. How does he, in imagination, picture his beloved as she stands invisible to him behind the lattice (v. 14)? She responds in vv. 15-17. V. 15 is probably a fragment of the song of a vineyard watcher and may be viewed as an appeal to her lover, a shepherd "among the lilies" (v. 16). She asks him to return in the coolness of the break of day. Note the slightly different form of v. 16 in 6:3, and sense the beauty and depth of this expression of love's ownership.

In 3:1-5 the bride describes her dream. She dreamt that, waking in the night, she had searched for her groom until she found him. Describe her search as she dreamed it. Where did she go? Whom did she meet in her search? Sense

the intensity of her relief when she found him. Where did she take him (v. 4)? Feel the consuming power of her affection (v. 5).

Reading 53: Song of Songs 3:6–5:1

THE WEDDING PROCESSION AND BRIDAL SONGS

In Songs 3:6-11 we have a song describing the peasant wedding procession. The bridegroom, impersonating King Solomon, accompanied by sixty warriors, friends of the bridegroom, goes forth in his covered carriage, his "car of state," borne on the shoulders of servants to the place where the bride waits with her maids, the "daughters of Zion." The bride, accompanied by her maids, is then brought to the house of the parents of the groom. Compare Psa. 45:8-15 and Mt. 25:1-12. Picture the rustic wedding procession, noting the clouds of dust, the air fragrant with incense and spices, and the beauty of the car of state in which the "king" rides. It is possible that the description of this car was colored by the description of Solomon's throne as given in 1 Kings 10:18-20. Who is is that "crowns" the bridegroom (v. 11)? Compare Isa. 61:10. The crowning of the bride and bridegroom is still a part of the Jewish marriage ceremonial.

In 4:1-7 the bride is described in detail. This is just such a song as that which the Arabs call a *wasf,* which is commonly sung at Syrian weddings today. Observe the vivid and quite unique description of her eyes, hair, teeth, mouth, temples, her neck ornamented with a coin-strung necklace, and her shapely breasts. Note especially the vivid description of her teeth, perfect, white, and clean. How would young women of today react to such glowing description of their beauty? How would they respond to the closing line in v. 7?

In 4:8–5:1 we have a new song with the background of

another scene. The peasant lover invites his bride to go from the beauty of the Lebanon region, from Mount Lebanon itself, the peak whence flows the Amana River ("Abanah" in 2 Kings 5:12), to Damascus and Mount Hermon (Deut. 3:9). The charm of his bride, her attractiveness, and the fragrance of her garments, are vividly described in vv. 9-11. The feeling of exclusive possessiveness, that she belongs to him and to him alone, is suggested by the figures of a locked garden and an enclosed garden fountain (v. 12). What herbs are mentioned as growing in that "garden," and what qualities in the bride may they represent (vv. 13-14)? In v. 16 the bride responds, expressing her longing to be possessed by him, calling to the cool north wind and the warm south wind, by their alternation, to waft the aroma of the garden toward her lover. Outline, on the basis of v. 16, a sermon to young women on the theme "Your Life Can Be a Garden," using also Isa. 58:11. In 5:1 the marriage has taken place, and this song is sung during the week of festivities. The groom invites his beloved friends to partake of the marriage feast.

Reading 54: Song of Songs 5:2–6:3

THE SEARCH FOR THE LOST BRIDEGROOM

Songs 5:2-8 reminds us vividly of 3:1-5. The bride was asleep, but her mind and heart were vividly awake. In a dream she heard a knock and the dear voice of her beloved. At first she excused herself, but at length she opened the door—only to find that he had withdrawn. In her dream she sought for him, calling his name; but she found him not. Watchmen, taking her for a dishonorable woman, treated her insolently; the wallkeepers robbed her of her veil.

She encounters the daughters of Jerusalem and gives them a message for her beloved, in case they should meet

him (v. 8). Speaking to her graciously, the daughters of Jerusalem ask for the description of her beloved (v. 9). She responds in another *wasf.* (vv. 10-16), a song of praise to the groom, the counterpart of 4:1-7. Picture in your imagination her description of his complexion, his head, hair, eyes, cheeks, lips, his hands, his body, his limbs, the view of his face, and his mouth. How would a modern young man react to such a description of his beauty?

The daughters of Jerusalem ask where her lover has gone (6:1), to which the bride again answers (vv. 2-3), "to his own garden"; and as she answers thus, she emphasizes afresh that she belongs to him and he to her (see 2:16).

Reading 55: Song of Songs 6:4–7:9

THE BEAUTY OF THE BRIDE

These songs celebrating the charms of the bride are quite like 4:1-7. In the first one (6:4-9) the physical beauty of the bride is again described. She is lovely as Tirzah, the fair ancient residence of King Jeroboam I before Samaria displaced it. The name means "pleasantness." She is beautiful as Jerusalem and, as is the case with most beautiful young women, young men fall to her as to an army! Outline a sermon to young women on "The Influence of Christian Young Women," basing it on 6:4. Compared to all the women of the "court," she alone shines as undefiled, the choicest of her mother's daughters, the praise of the "royal court."

V. 10 is another beautiful song delicately praising the bride. She is as the freshness of the dawn, fair like the moon, clear and brilliant like the sun. And again, before her, men fall!

Another song (vv. 11-12) tells that when the bridegroom came to get her she was enjoying her garden, inspecting lovingly its plants and vines. Then suddenly, before she

was aware of it, she was in the bridal procession and her "king's" people were *her* people.

The dance of the bride begins at 6:13 and continues through 7:9. The wedding guests sing the praises of the bride (cf. 4:1-5). See *ABC,* p. 626, under 7:1-9 for the significance of "Shulammite." "The dance of Mahanaim" (6:13) is the sword dance of the bride. As she dances, the wedding guests praise her physical grace and charm. We feel the mounting swiftness of the dance, the rhythm and beauty of her every movement. It is a picture of life in the "immovable East" that the poet paints before us, full of warmth, grace, and charm.

Reading 56: Song of Songs 7:10–8:14

This section as far as 8:7 is chiefly composed of love songs sung by the bride. Read 7:10-12, which, like 2:8-14, is a springtime love song. It portrays the desire of the bride to go forth with her beloved into the Palestinian fields, to linger among the fragrant yellow-white clusters of the henna flowers (see *ABC,* p. 627, on v. 10), to visit the vineyards to see whether the vine has budded and whether the pomegranate is in flower. We can almost smell the peculiar fragrance of the cup-shaped, rich purple flowers of the mandrakes, and in the shelves over the doors of the village houses we can see the attractive array of dried and fresh fruit such as the bride has prepared for her lover.

The theme of the bride's song in 8:1-4 is "Oh that thou wert as my brother." She longs to show her affection to her groom with no fear of being accused of improper conduct. She longs to lead him to her own home where her mother might instruct her how to take her place in the near-at-hand new relationship. In her home she would set before her lover her choice wines, and there he would show her his affection. In v. 4 she counsels the young women of Jerusalem to let the awakening of romance in

their lives take its own time. It is so strong and so much a part of young womanhood that at the proper time it will awake in their hearts.

The little fragment of song in the first two lines of v. 5 is sung to the bride and pictures her in a bridal procession as she returns to the village after the wedding, leaning upon her groom.

The rest of v. 5 (beginning "Under the apple-tree") is sung by the groom, who, as he comes near the place where his bride once lived, points out the spot where he kissed her awake.

The book achieves its climax in one of the most beautiful and impressive love songs of all time (vv. 6-7). The bride here sings of the unquenchable passion and incomparable value of love. As a seal marks the prized possession of its owner, so she longs to be a seal upon the arm and heart of her beloved, marking him as belonging to her as long as life shall last. She is aware of the terrific power of love, and of the hard cruelty of the jealousy she would feel in case the love she enjoys should be given to another. Write in your own words in your notebook your conception of what v. 7 means. Outline a sermon to young people on "The Sacredness of Love," basing it on 8:6-7.

Vv. 8-10 are a song of the bride's childhood. They recall her girlhood before she had matured into young womanhood. If she had then been asked in marriage and, like a "wall," had repelled male advances, her brothers were pledged to protect her. If, like an open "door," she had welcomed such advances, they would have barred off all approach to her. V. 10 tells how she had guarded herself against all such advances until, upon attaining womanhood, her true lover came and took her to his heart.

In vv. 11-12 the groom sings to his bride, whom he calls his "vineyard" and cherishes as being more valuable than even the vast vineyard of Solomon. Let Solomon and his

vinedressers keep all that the royal vineyard might yield. He, without Solomon's expense, glories in his "vineyard," the desire of his heart.

The bride while in the gardens is asked by her lover to sing for her companions. So she sings a portion of a song she had sung already, calling her beloved to hasten to her like a young hart from the mountains (vv. 13-14; cf. 2:17).

Written Work.—Write a careful, full paragraph pointing out what values you have found in the Song of Songs and how you justify its inclusion in a book of the sacred literature of the Hebrews. Make this as definite as you can.

VII

LYRICS OF LAMENT

Lamentations

THE name of this book accurately describes its contents, for its five poems are lamentations over the destruction of Jerusalem and its dire consequences. But probably none of them, despite the subtitle, were written by Jeremiah. The earliest of these poems are chs. 2 and 4, which might be entitled "The Judgment of God" and "The Contrast Between Jerusalem's Past and Present." These are also the best poems from the literary point of view and give dramatic glimpses of the terrors of the siege of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans in 587 B.C. They were probably written in Babylonia about 560 B.C. Poem 5, a prayer of the Jewish people in Palestine for Jehovah to intervene, describes vividly the fate of the Judeans in Palestine and was probably written in that country a generation after it was conquered, but before the Temple had been rebuilt (520-16 B.C.). Poem 1, lamenting the desolation of Jerusalem, makes no mention of a king but refers to priests, elders, and princes as in highest authority. This poem came from a poet who lived in Jerusalem between the time when the second Temple was rebuilt (516 B.C.) and the new awakening which came with Nehemiah (444 B.C.). Poem 3, a poet's lament and prayer, comes from the fourth or third century B.C., after the Palestinian community has been revived through the reforms instigated by Nehemiah.

Poems 1, 2, and 3 have twenty-two sections, each com-

posed of three lines, and each section, respectively, beginning with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet taken in order. Poem 4 is similarly fashioned except that each of its twenty-two sections is composed of two lines. Poem 5 likewise has the same number of sections, but follows no alphabetical sequence in its verses.

Reading 57: Lamentations 1

THE DESOLATION OF JERUSALEM

Depopulated Jerusalem sits lonely and weeping, for the Judeans are now exiles (vv. 1-3). No pilgrims on the way to the feasts throng the roads to Jerusalem, for worship on the Temple site has ceased. Foreigners (Persians) are in authority over the people. The splendor of Zion is a thing of the past, and the vivid memories of that past only magnify the poignancy of the present. Pagan captors have entered her holy Temple. The inhabitants have fallen upon desperate times and are face to face with starvation. What has brought Jerusalem to such a state of affairs? The poet is clear as to this: it is Jerusalem's sin that is responsible (vv. 8-9). From its deep distress the religious community cries unto God that he may see its pitiable plight brought on by enemy hands (vv. 1-11).

Zion appeals to the passer-by for discerning sympathy for the desperate hour upon which she has fallen, realizing that it is the hand of God that has thus reduced her (vv. 12-17). She acknowledges her guilt before Jehovah, but as she has earlier appealed to the passer-by (v. 12) now she appeals to the nations for sympathy. They, however, take delight in her despair. So Zion prays that a like judgment may overtake them (vv. 18-22).

Reading 58: Lamentations 2

THE JUDGMENT OF GOD

This is one of the finest poems of the book. It seems most likely that the author had been an eyewitness of the events described, for the swiftly drawn pictures are vivid and realistic. It is written in the meter of lamentation, which is a form of Hebrew poetry in which there are three rhythmic beats in the first half of the line followed by two in the second. As an illustration, note v. 7:

1 2 3
The Lord hath cast off his altar,

1 2
he hath abhorred his sanctuary;

1 2 3
He hath given up into the hand of the enemy

1 2
the walls of her palaces.

This meter has also been called the "echo" meter, wherein the two stressed words of the second half-line sound like an echo of the first half-line.

The theme of vv. 1-10 is the destruction of Jerusalem by the righteous wrath of Jehovah. Israel's national "beauty" has been thrown down. Jerusalem is lovingly called, in Isaiah's phrase (Isa. 1:8), "the daughter of Zion." The wrath of Jehovah has not spared even the Temple, the "footstool" of his feet (cf. Ezek. 43:7: "This is the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel forever"). Note the completeness of the destruction. The country parts of Judea and the fortified cities had been thrown down. The kingdom and its rulers had been humiliated, and Jehovah's protection had been withdrawn before the attacking enemy (vv. 1-3). Indeed, to the poet it seemed

that Jehovah himself had started the devouring conflagration or, to change the figure, like an archer had shot at his people as at an enemy (vv. 3-4). Palaces, fortifications, yes, the Temple itself, lovingly called (v. 4) "the tent of the daughter of Zion"—all lie in ruins. No longer can the appointed feasts be held. Pagan din is heard within these sacred sanctuary walls. The city walls of Jerusalem have been broken down as a safeguard against rebellion (cf. 2 Kings 25:10; the gates have been leveled to the ground.

The king and the princes of Judah have been exiled to Babylon, as have likewise the priests and the prophets. The priests have no priestly direction by which to guide and teach the people. The prophets have no vision of Jehovah by which to inspire and steady the exiles (v. 9).

Then, at v. 10, the poet takes us back to Jerusalem, where we see the elders who have been left behind sitting in humiliation and in lamentation while the Judean maidens hang their heads in disgrace.

So just like a psalmist the poet pours forth his lament over Zion's pitiable plight. His whole inner being is distraught. He sees famine stalking the streets of the city. Tiny children who cannot understand their privation cry to their mothers for corn to eat, then swoon away in their distracted mothers' arms (vv. 11-12). Jerusalem's situation is desperate, she is broken and destroyed beyond repair (v. 13).

The poet recalls those superficial prophets of Jeremiah's time who had "healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace" (Jer. 8:11), and who had predicted speedy return from the exile. With such false optimism the prophet Hananiah had encouraged the people (cf. Jer. 28:1). But these prophets had proved powerless to bring the captives back to the homeland (Lam. 2:14).

Picturing the exultant contempt of Zion's enemies over

Zion, the poet in vv. 15-16 quotes from Psa. 48:2, which calls Zion "the joy of the whole earth," and from Psa. 50:2, which calls it "the perfection of beauty." The warnings of the prophetic Law (Deut. 28:15f.) and the priestly Law (Lev. 26:14f.) have been ignored, hence destruction has come (v. 17).

At vv. 18-19 the poet calls upon Jerusalem to cry out unto God with hands uplifted in supplication and the lamentation closes with the prayer itself, which is a passionate appeal unto God (vv. 20-22). Feel the poignant emotion in the words of v. 20: "Behold to whom thou hast done thus!" The objects of Jehovah's loving care and upbringing lie dead in the streets. Priests and prophets, men and women, old and young have been killed. The community consciousness of the judgment of God moves the soul of the poet (v. 22). How vivid the poet makes this black picture of destruction and ruin!

In your notebook write a paragraph on the responsibility of the prophets for Jerusalem's destruction, as the poet conceives it, and comment on the justice of his criticism.

Reading 59: Lamentations 3

A POET'S LAMENT AND PRAYER

Although in literary construction the most artificial of them all, this is nevertheless the richest of the poems from the religious and devotional angle. It is a personal lament of a man who had experienced deeply both tragedy and joy. In tracing his experience he begins at the time when he had felt himself to be under the punishment of God (vv. 1-3). He then proceeds to describe his miseries in detail (vv. 4-18). He has lost flesh. Imaginatively he feels as though he has already experienced the deep gloom of Sheol. With vv. 7-8 compare Job 19:7-12, upon which the poet seems dependent; and with vv. 12-13, Job 16:12-13.

He had once been prosperous and happy but now he is physically weak and has lost his hope that God would help.

Yet in the crushing misery of his soul he remembered the loving-kindnesses and compassions of Jehovah, and these recollections awakened hope that help might come from God (vv. 19-24). How, according to this man's experience, may we receive help from God (vv. 25-26)? Outline a sermon in your notebook on "The Place of Discipline in Our Youth," basing it on vv. 25-30, and especially on v. 27. Compare with Heb. 12:7-11. In vv. 31-33 are found three thoughts which help toward an attitude that accepts the discipline of God: (1) Punishment will not last forever. (2) God deals with us in compassion. (3) He does not punish us in anger. God looks with disapproval upon (1) the oppression of prisoners by their captors, (2) the withholding from a man of that to which he has an honest claim, and (3) the defrauding of a man of his legal rights. When a man suffers, the poet maintains, it is because he has sinned.

So he calls his fellow countrymen to join him in self-examination and confession of sin (vv. 40-42). He begins in the mood of lament over the anger and seeming aloofness of God and over the reviling his people are suffering from their enemies (vv. 43-48). The poet's tears flow unto God—tears of sympathy for the young women of Jerusalem whose sufferings deeply stir his soul (vv. 49-51).

At vv. 52-54 he turns back to his own suffering. He feels that he has been unjustly hunted down and imprisoned in a dungeon. He is engulfed in a sea of troubles. From the depths of the dungeon he cries to Jehovah. Note that, as he prays, he bases his present hope on past experience (vv. 55-58). So he appeals to God who knows that he is a victim of injustice (vv. 59-63). In the passionate mood characteristic of the lament he calls upon God to repay his enemies as they deserve. We should read the verbs of

vv. 64-66 as imperatives—"Render unto them," "give them," "pursue them," and "destroy them."

Reading 60: Lamentations 4

THE CONTRAST BETWEEN JERUSALEM'S PAST AND PRESENT

This poem, likewise, is brilliant from the literary angle. It is written in the same meter and comes from the same period as poem 2. It centers greater attention upon the suffering of the people and shows the relation of their sufferings to the sin of the nation. The chapter opens with the siege of Jerusalem (vv. 1-10).

The Temple lies in ruins. The gold of Zion's citizenry, "the precious sons of Zion," are dealt with as though of no more worth than clay for earthenware. For nursing infants there is no milk; young children cry for bread but none is given them (vv. 1-5). What, in the final analysis, has brought this about? The poet's answer is clear: It is Zion's iniquity which exceeded that of iniquitous Sodom (v. 6). Her nobles, once handsome, are now so emaciated they cannot be recognized. Terrible as it is to die in battle, it is better than slow death by famine (vv. 7-9). The siege has led to desperation in which starving women boiled and ate the flesh of their own children (v. 10; cf. Jer. 19:9).

No one had thought Jerusalem could be invaded, and it was because of Jerusalem's sins that Jehovah had thus punished his people. Whose is the major responsibility for the sin (v. 13; cf. Jer. 6:13; 23:11-12)? Feel the degradation which the priesthood had reached in the popular thought of the people (vv. 14-15). Sense the unwanted situation of this degenerate priesthood, with no nation deserving their presence or giving them welcome. In v. 16*b* read, with the Greek translation of the O. T., "they favored not the prophets."

The Judeans had looked to Egypt for help but in vain

(v. 17). Residents of the city could not in safety be seen on the streets of Jerusalem during the Chaldean siege. The Chaldeans "hunted their steps" (v. 18). They overtook the fleeing King Zedekiah, whom the poet in reverence calls "the breath of our nostrils," who was the last hope of Judah's national existence (vv. 19-20; cf. Jer. 39:4-7). Edom, now rejoicing over Judah's fall—of this the poet is convinced—will suffer a like humiliation (vv. 21-22). Why was the priesthood so degenerate in this period and why were the prophets so lacking in community respect? Feel the searching challenge of such criticisms for today's ministry.

Reading 61: Lamentations 5

THE PRAYER OF THE JEWISH COMMUNITY IN PALESTINE FOR JEHOVAH TO INTERVENE

The poet, as we have seen, writes from the time immediately before the rebuilding of the Temple. It is a lament similar to the national or congregational laments of Psalms. The poet begins with an appeal to Jehovah to see the desperate need of his people (v. 1). It is as though he would say to God, "If only thou wouldst *see,* thou wouldst help!" Palestine is now under the control of the Persians. The Judean remnant feel destitute, helpless, and at the mercy of their overlords, just as though they were orphans, fatherless, and widows (vv. 2-3). Now they have to buy the very water they drink and the wood they burn (v. 4). The pressure of the Persian yoke is harsh upon them. They feel, as had Ezekiel's fellow citizens, that they are suffering now because their fathers of an earlier day had shortsightedly and faithlessly turned to Egypt and Assyria, and away from Jehovah, for help. Note the proverb (v. 7) which in Ezekiel's day, and even in Jeremiah's, had been popular (Ezek. 18:2; Jer. 31:29). His people were now under the authority of men who, compared to themselves, were as

slaves—but they were nevertheless in power (v. 8). When the conquered Judeans ventured forth to the fields to make a living by reaping or shepherding or herding, they were a prey for the marauding Bedouins (v. 9). To cap it all, famine had brought on fevers, and they felt as though they were burning up (v. 10).

Suddenly we are transported in memory back to the tragic incidents connected with the fall of their beloved capital. The poet recalls with horror the brutalities of the Chaldean troops—the ravishing of the women of Zion, the torture of princes to get them to divulge where hidden treasure might be found, the forced labor to which young men and children were put. The picture of tender childhood stumbling under burdens too severe for their young shoulders is brought vividly to mind. The happy, interesting social life in the open place at the city gate, the "men's club" of ancient Israel, was no more. Mirth and music were gone from both age and youth. The honor, dignity, and well-being of the community were things of the past (vv. 11-15). How real all this is again in today's world!

Why has it come to this? The poet has his answer. "Woe unto us!" he cries, "for we have sinned" (v. 16). V. 18 suggests that to this poet the destruction of the Temple lay considerably in the past. The poet appeals to his God, whose life and rule over his people embrace many centuries, in the passionate tones with which a lament almost invariably closes. Why thus forget us, he cries unto God (v. 20), why forsake us for so long a time? He prays for a repentant heart in the community and for the renewal of the good days of Israel's glorious past, but he ends on the note of deep dejection (vv. 21-22).

Written Work.—Write a paragraph giving a general picture of the siege of Jerusalem and its results as seen in these laments. What lesson to the religious leader comes from them?

VIII

THE WRESTLE WITH THE PROBLEM OF PAIN

Job

THE book of Job is the masterpiece of Hebrew literature. For the most part it is poetry. But the great poet who was its author made free and creative use of an old prose folk tale which he utilized as the basis of his work, portions of which have been preserved in the prologue and epilogue of the book (Job 1-2; 42:7-17). This story told about a righteous man, Job, who was put to the test of heavy material and personal loss and of great physical and spiritual suffering, and how in all that testing he did not lose his faith but conducted himself in a manner acceptable to God. As a reward God restored to him twice as much property and gave to him as many children as he had had before. His friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, who had come "to bemoan him and to comfort him," are sharply condemned because, in contrast to Job, they had not spoken of God "the thing that is right."

The poet who took this tale over and made it the basis of his work grapples with the greatest problem known to the mind of man, the problem of suffering. Through the speeches of Job, irritated yet stimulated by the words of his friends, he moves from gloom to light, from despair to storm and tempest in his innermost spirit to the calm of gleams of hope, from doubt and rebellion to faith, from

religious certainty. The heart of the poem is the debate between Job and his friends (Job 4-31), which develops in three cycles, in each of which the three friends speak in turn, with Job answering each speech.

For the minister it is a book of rich contribution, for it is a searching, penetrating warning against superficial dealing with bodies, minds, and spirits that are racked with pain. Above every other lesson it appeals to the spiritual imagination of the preacher and says to him: Put yourself at the point of view of the sufferer; see with him, think with him, feel with him; look behind his words; deal with him with genuine and profound sympathy. The pastor who reads this book slowly and carefully will be thereby inwardly cleansed and spiritually strengthened for his task as a physician of souls.

Moreover, we see in this book a true pilgrim's progress. One is convinced as he reads that he is in the atmosphere of spiritual autobiography. The author wrote this book in his heart's blood. He challenged the traditional answers to the problem of pain. He showed them up in their limitations and, by the venture of faith, blazed new trails and opened up new approaches to the as yet unsolved problem. And he leaves us at a point where Job, though still in pain and with mighty questions unanswered, has through an experimental faith in God achieved an acceptance of his life, and his stormy spirit has attained humility and teachableness in the vision of God.

Reading 62: Job 1–2

THE PROLOGUE

The opening of the prologue (vv. 1-5) sets us in the land of Uz, east of Palestine, near Edom, where we are introduced to Job, a prosperous and devoutly religious sheik. How does the author—following the folk book—use the

symbolism of numbers to suggest Job's prosperity at the hands of God (vv. 2-3)? Set down in your notebook a brief description of Job's character. Note the continual round of religious festivals in cycles of seven held by his children (vv. 4-5).

Suddenly at vv. 6-12 we are transported into the presence of Jehovah. He is holding a council with his servants, "the sons of God" (cf. 1 Kings 22:19-22), and among them is Satan, "the Adversary" (note margin), whose task is explained as "going to and fro in the earth, and . . . walking up and down in it." It is his business to examine the world with the infamous object of spying out and maliciously magnifying the evil there to be found. To Jehovah's commendation of Job he suggests, by a skeptical, rhetorical question (v. 9), that Job's piety has as its motive considerations of material advantage and that this fact would soon be apparent if his property were but taken from him. Put v. 9 in your own words. Jehovah accepts the challenge of the Adversary and puts Job's *property* in his power in order to test and prove the integrity of Job's character. How far is the Adversary permitted to go and with what single limitation (v. 12)?

Read with alert imagination 1:13-22 as the story of the Adversary's first attempt to prove the limitations of Job's piety. Observe the four progressive strokes of misfortune for which the Adversary is responsible. Feel the suddenness and the breathless succession of these four strokes, emphasized by the threefold "While he was yet speaking." How did Job respond to these blows of misfortune (vv. 20-22)?

Ch. 2 opens with a second council of God with his servants. Put in your own words the Adversary's response to Jehovah's renewed and strengthened commendation of Job (vv. 4-5). What is the sole limitation under which Jehovah now places the Adversary as Job is put more deeply into his power (v. 6)? What is the likely name of

the disease which the Adversary now brings upon him (vv. 7-8; see *ABC,* p. 490)? Note the womanly sympathy of v. 9. Feel the Eastern quality of his piety of resignation (v. 10). Picture in your imagination the Oriental scene, the coming of Job's three friends "to bemoan him and to comfort him," their lamentations and their silence (vv. 12-13).

Reading 63: Job 3

JOB'S PASSIONATE LAMENT

Read aloud the lament of vv. 1-10. Then read Jer. 20: 14-18, upon which the author of Job is probably here dependent. Feel in Job's words the play upon the theme of darkness. Upon what day and night do his curses fall (v. 3)? In v. 8 leviathan is the dragon of chaos who threatens the order of the world (see *ABC,* p. 490). What is the reason for the curse he has just uttered (v. 9)? With vv. 11-12 there comes a development of thought. Why, he asks, did he not die immediately after he was born? Where would Job now be if he had died at birth (v. 13)?

What is the heart of Job's challenge to God in vv. 20-26 (especially v. 20)? For the disquiet of his soul, portrayed here with sensitive psychological insight, compare Deut. 28:66-67. What is your impression of the literary quality of this chapter?

Written Work.—Basing your words on vv. 13-19, describe Sheol, the realm of the dead (*ABC,* p. 490), and show what elements in Sheol have most attraction now for Job. Note that these verses afford important source material for the Hebrew conception of the realm of the dead.

Reading 64: Job 4–5

ELIPHAZ' FIRST SPEECH

Eliphaz, the oldest, wisest, and most courteous of Job's friends, now opens the first cycle of the debate. In calm,

dignified tone he rebukes Job (vv. 1-6). Put v. 6 in your own words. Note how in v. 7 Eliphaz *implies* that Job is guilty of something before God. In vv. 7-11 he pictures how the wicked come to destruction like the breakup of a lion's den. Five different words are used for lion. To what does he compare the judgment that comes upon them from God (v. 9)?

In vv. 12-16 Eliphaz gives the report of a vision experience which taught him the lesson he would now pass on to Job. Picture to yourself the psychological experience as here reported and explain what the vision was intended to teach him, noting especially v. 17 (following the marginal reading) and putting it in your own words.

In 5:1-7 he pictures how insecure the wicked are. In v. 2 read with the margin "indignation" instead of "jealousy." What does this suggest as to Job's mood? See how Eliphaz has been roused by the rebellious impatience in Job (5:2). According to Eliphaz, is affliction ever accidental (v. 6)? He suggests to Job the mood of submission to God as the way to happiness in his crisis (vv. 8-16). How would you in one word characterize God as Eliphaz views him (vv. 9-16)? Instead of the attitude of impatience, what does Eliphaz suggest (v. 8)?

At vv. 17-26 Eliphaz gives expression to one of his finest thoughts—suffering as a discipline, a correction. Is this an adequate explanation of suffering? There are mentioned seven "troubles" from which God will deliver the man who accepts correction (vv. 19-22). Picture to yourself peace between man and nature (vv. 23-24) as portrayed by him and read the similar conceptions in Isa. 11:6-9 and 65:25. Keep in mind as you read vv. 25-27 that the O. T. tends to view premature death as a punishment for sin. Outline in your notebook a sermon on "Spiritual Maturity," basing it upon the beautiful picture in v. 26.

Reading 65: Job 6–7

JOB'S FIRST REPLY TO ELIPHAZ

Job now responds. His words start from Eliphaz' surprise at Job's lament (4:5-6), and Job defends his resentment (6:1-7). What view of the relation of God to suffering is suggested in 6:4? Then comes his passionate cry for death (vv. 8-10). Sense how his earlier lament (3:21-22) prepared the way for this. If he should die, that is, if God should cut him off, what would then be of comfort to him in his last agonies (v. 10)? Note how his affliction is so severe that it has robbed him of his reserves of patience (vv. 11-12).

Wherein does Job feel that his friends have failed him (vv. 14-15)? He compares the failure of friendship in the crisis to the drying up of a Palestinian brook (vv. 15-20). Outline a sermon, based on 6:14-20, on "When Friendship Fails." What warning is there in vv. 21-23 to a minister who would comfort a man in intense pain? Take home to your own mind and heart Job's demand for plain teaching (vv. 24-25). There is the hint of a sermon on "The Power of Sincere Speech" in v. 25. How had the friends shown superficiality in dealing with him (vv. 26-28)? What change in bearing on the part of the friends seems implied in vv. 29-30?

Life now seems to Job like warfare (7:1). He feels like a hired laborer who, interested solely in his pay, longs for the day to be over (v. 2). In vv. 3-6 we get one of the clearest glimpses of the exact nature of his physical ailment. What is the content of his plea to God (vv. 7-10)? Feel the pathos of his turning, at v. 7, from his friends to God. Note how closely in harmony with the Babylonian designation of the underworld as "the land of no return" are vv. 7-10. These verses are excellent source material for the Hebrew idea of Sheol, the realm of the dead.

At v. 11 begins Job's defense of his right to complain. God seems to him like a heartless but alert watchman keeping guard over him as though he were a sea monster like leviathan (cf. 3:8). Does night bring Job any release (vv. 13-15)? How has he come to feel about the value of life (v. 16)? Compare vv. 17-18 with the noble psalm which exalts the dignity of man, Psa. 8, especially v. 5. Job's words are a parody on that psalm. His speech ends with the picture of God as a hostile, unsympathetic watcher of his every movement (vv. 19-21). How impressive is Job's feeling that he is under the scrutiny of God's *hostile* eyes!

Reading 66: Job 8

BILDAD'S FIRST SPEECH

Bildad now speaks. He is the traditionalist. He directs Job's mind to the wisdom of the past, especially in vv. 8-10. It is evident that Job's words have been full of storm and fury (cf. 6:26), for Bildad takes his start from this passionate temper of Job (v. 2), which he laments and, by implication, criticizes. He has a single theme which he defends: God in his justice makes a distinction between the righteous and the wicked in his dealings with men. To this men can only bow and submit. Bildad's piety, like that of Eliphaz, is in thorough harmony with the Mohammedan doctrine of "Islam"—that is, "submission." Note that in vv. 3-4 Bildad suggests the possibility that the death of Job's children (cf. 1:19) was due to their sins, and infers in vv. 5-6 that Job's suffering is due to his.

Outline a sermon on Job 8:8-10 on the theme "Learning the Lessons of History." This is one of the finest portions of Bildad's speech. Bildad, certain of God's destruction of the wicked, interprets it by illustrations from nature—the juicy papyrus reeds of the Nile (vv. 11-13) and the plant shooting up luxuriantly in the garden (vv. 16-20) both

come to destruction; the one withers to death, the other is destroyed and completely effaced. A third picture is that of a fragile spider web (vv. 14-15), an illustration of the wicked man's fragile hold upon life. When the sustaining grace of God is taken away, then men fall. Bildad implies that Job in his present misfortune is a godless man from whom God's upholding help has been removed. Bildad's first speech ends in the thought that Job must be a wicked man (v. 20), else God would "awake" on his behalf and change his lot (cf. v. 6).

Reading 67: Job 9–10

JOB'S ANSWER TO BILDAD

Although they had not actually said it, Eliphaz and Bildad had both implied that Job's suffering had been the result of his sin. Eliphaz had arrived at his view by the influence of a personal revelation (4:12f.). Bildad reached his opinion through the testimony of human experience that there operates in life a moral law (8:8-10). But Bildad thought this moral law operated directly and at once in every individual life.

Job's answer starts from this moral law which he also accepts (v. 2; see also Eliphaz' view in 4:17), but he maintains that God is a being of awful power (vv. 1-4). How can mere man establish his innocence before the all-powerful God? Suppose a man should dare to defend his innocence before God, how could he answer the questions God would put and come off victorious (vv. 3-4)? Feel the power of God in the world of nature as pictured in vv. 5-12 and sense the poetic majesty of the passage. Job implies that, like overturned mountains, he knows that God has passed by only because his life has been overturned (v. 11). God deals with Job like an irresponsible despot (v. 12). Before this powerful being who at the beginning had mastered

the dragon Job feels incapable of self-defense (vv. 13-14). He would, in panic, desert reasoned argument for terrified entreaty (vv. 15-20). In vv. 21-24 he is driven to defy Bildad's dogma and to assert that, so far as his own experience is concerned, God deals with him no differently from what he does with a wicked man (v. 22). Feel the force of the three pictures which portray his life as speeding toward its tragic goal of death (vv. 25-26)! He feels the unfair severity of God and even wishes that God were as fair as a mere human being would be (vv. 27-33). There is a hint of a human longing for the reality of the incarnation in these latter verses.

Why, he asks, does God thus oppress him? Is he not the work of God's hands (10:17)? Then in a beautiful and moving passage he pictures God's prenatal care of him when, in the womb of his mother, his body was in process of taking shape (vv. 8-12). Here begins to dawn a nobler and more tender conception of God; but all this fashioning divine care now seems to have deserted him and he has become the target of God's wrath (vv. 13-17). How much better for him would it be had he died at birth (vv. 18-22)!

Reading 68: Job 11

ZOPHAR'S FIRST SPEECH

Zophar is the youngest of the three friends. He is passionate, indignant, and discourteous. While Job believes in his own innocence (cf. 9:20-21), Zophar is convinced that God considers him guilty and has the effrontery to say so (vv. 1-6). What impression had the words of Job made on Zophar (vv. 2-3)? Zophar emphasizes the wisdom and power of God as being beyond human grasp (vv. 7-12). Feel the implied slap at Job in vv. 11-12!

In vv. 13-20 of Zophar's speech there is a noble call to repentance. Here is the basis for a very helpful message,

especially appropriate for an evangelistic sermon or for a Lenten address. Four steps in repentance are here described: (1) a firm determination, (2) humble petition, (3) the renouncing of personal sin, (4) the ceasing to commit any injustice toward another. The outcome of such repentance is described in vv. 15-19, and what will take place if the sinner does not repent is portrayed in v. 20.

Reading 69: Job 12–14

JOB'S FIRST REPLY TO ZOPHAR

We shall consider in these three chapters only the most significant verses in this important and moving speech. Job makes the charge that his friends' words are shallow and do not sound the depths of his suffering (12:4-5). Feel in these two verses the challenge to social imagination, to putting yourself in the other man's shoes, to thinking and feeling with him. Job tests their words in the crucible of his own experience (v. 11). To get the force of vv. 12 and 13, preface v. 12 by "You say" and v. 13 by "I say." In v. 13 Job for a moment seems to appeal beyond his friends' wisdom to that of God.

Job claims that his wisdom is on an equality with theirs (13:1-2) and accuses them of insincerity in their defense of God (vv. 7-12). He decides to take his very life into his hands and appeal to God (vv. 13-15). We are at the dawn of a great conception of God on Job's part, not the traditional God but, as it were, the emerging God of his own experience. *This* God would reprove Job's friends (v. 10). He is uncertain what the outcome of thus confronting God will be but maintains that he will at any rate have the inner consciousness of his own integrity (vv. 16-19). But he asks temporary release from pain for this meeting with God, then asks God to state his charge (vv. 20-23). But no, God hides his face (v. 24). Job is not permitted to

confront him, and he feels that he is a prisoner of God with his feet in the stocks (vv. 24-27).

Then comes one of the most impressive chapters in the book. The frailty of man, a being subject to death, transient as a flower and insubstantial as a shadow, is the theme of a lament (14:1-2). Why does God deal so harshly with this helpless being (vv. 5-6)? Man is not like a tree, which when cut down may send forth from its truncated stump new sprouts (vv. 7-9). When man dies, that is the end (vv. 10-12). Yet suppose Sheol, the realm of the dead, were but a sort of temporary place where man might find refuge until God's wrath was past! Suppose God should at length long for his creature, remember him, and call him back to life! If that were so, then, so far as his lot of suffering was concerned, he could take it! Death would be but release (vv. 13-15). But he raises this possibility of a life beyond the experience of death only to deny it, and his speech ends in pessimism (vv. 16-17). The inhabitants of Sheol are ignorant of what occurs on earth (vv. 20-22). There is possible a pre-Easter sermon, based on 14:14-15, on "The Longing for Immortality." Remember from Tennyson's "In Memoriam":

> He [man] thinks he was not made to die;
> And thou hast made him: thou art just.

Reading 70: Job 15

ELIPHAZ' SECOND SPEECH

With Eliphaz' second speech the second cycle (Job 15-21) of the debate begins. The theme of the first cycle was the righteousness of God. The theme of the second cycle is the fate of the wicked. Eliphaz is less calm, more severe, and very sensitive because of Job's frankness. Judging from v. 2, what had been the nature of Job's speeches? What do you think Eliphaz means by v. 4? In vv. 7-16 he rebukes Job's

presumption. He turns Job's words of 12:3 and 13:2 back upon himself and sarcastically says that Job has no unique and unshared access to the counsels of God (vv. 8-9). We get the impression from v. 10 that Job is young in comparison with the friends. He infers that Job has not received meekly "the consolations of God" which the friends have given but has shown great presumption and defiance (vv. 11-13). He returns to the thoughts he had earlier expressed in 4:17-19 and in v. 16, while speaking generally, he *infers* that Job is the "abominable" man. The theme of this speech is that a wicked man who appears to be prosperous is constantly tormented by the expectation of misfortune (vv. 17-24). A sword hangs over him (v. 22). And the reason for such torment, Eliphaz continues, is that the man has stubbornly defied God (vv. 25-28). Therefore, the wicked can look forward only to a disastrous fate (vv. 29-35). Feel the force of his pictures. The wicked are like grapes that never ripen, like olives with flowers which are profuse but do not set into fruit (v. 33). There is possible a sermon based on v. 33 on the theme "Arrested Spiritual Development."

Writen Work.—Outline for people who are in trouble a sermon on "The Consolations of God," basing it on v. 11. The need for consolation in an age like ours is universal and unspeakably great.

Reading 71: Job 16–17

JOB'S REPLY TO ELIPHAZ' SECOND SPEECH

Feel in 16:4-5 the challenge to the preacher for spiritual imagination, the power to feel with and for another, to sound the depths of his need so as to speak to him words to mitigate his grief and to strengthen his spirit. God seems to Job to be at enmity with him, he has destroyed his family and has ruthlessly touched Job himself (16:7-9, 12). He

has now become the butt of popular derision (vv. 10-11).

In 16:12-17 we get another vivid glimpse of the nature of his physical malady and how it seems to come upon him in waves of pain that bring endless and hopeless tears. His suffering is made all the more intolerable because in his innermost soul he knows no moral cause of it (v. 17).

Driven by his terrible pain, Job cries out unto God. He turns from his friends who can merely scoff at him to the God whom his desperate need *demands!* To this God, demanded by his bitter experience, he pours out anguished tears; but shining through them is a gleam of hope. His hope is that this God, in whom he now dimly believes, might show him to be in the right and in the presence of a "neighbor"—such as his friends—might vindicate him (vv. 18-21)! We are here aware that because of this thrust of Job's experience there is rising upon his soul a nobler view of God. Thus v. 21 represents a most important turning point in Job's mental struggle. God is no longer to him an unfeeling tyrant. His own longing leads him to believe in a God who will show him to be in the right. A verse in the Koran says, "There is no refuge from God but unto him." There is in v. 19 a theme for a sermon on the subject "Faith in Our Unseen Champion."

From such high thoughts—for the spirit of man cannot linger long in such spiritual elevation—Job falls back again into hopelessness. For the word "years" in 16:22 read "hours." Death is near, and his friends are but a continual provocation. What a failure of true friendship (17:1-2)! But he now appeals to this emerging God of his inner experience to "give bail" for him to the traditional God (v. 3)! His friends have forsaken him (vv. 4-5). But his speech ends in humiliation and pain, and with no hope of recovery (vv. 6-7, 10-16).

Reading 72: Job 18

BILDAD'S SECOND SPEECH

Bildad likewise is irritated by Job's emotional speech. We rightly read 17:8-9 immediately after 18:1-3. Job's words, Bildad says, astonish upright men and arouse innocent men (like Bildad himself!) to stir themselves up against the godless (such as Job!). But Job's challenges and charges will not divert any righteous man from his way. Bildad rebukes Job's presumption and then turns to his theme (vv. 4-7) that the wicked man does not prosper In vv. 8-11 the fall of the wicked is vividly portrayed. Note how wickedness is pictured as a trap and a cause of terror. It brings to the evildoer weakness and calamity and at length he confronts "the king of terrors," death itself (vv. 12-14)! And then he is destroyed root and branch (vv. 15-21). Feel here the characteristic Hebrew thought that evil, strong as it seems, has no permanence, no abiding reality.

Reading 73: Job 19

JOB'S SECOND REPLY TO BILDAD

This is another of the great chapters in the book. It opens with Job's customary rebuke to his friends, whose repeated reproaches have harassed his spirit (vv. 1-5). Bildad's every word had implied the wickedness of Job. From Job's lacerated inner being comes the cry that God has overthrown him (note margin). Then in a classic of lament against a seemingly heartless God, an enemy and not a friend, he pours out his charge that the universe is destitute of justice (vv. 7-12). Yet, more poignant still, there comes the humiliating awareness that to relatives and friends, to his own wife and brothers, he has become abhorrent (vv. 13-19). Most piercing of all is the pain caused by the thought that he is being assailed, yes, persecuted, by

God. In a wail of hunger for understanding he appeals for pity to his friends (vv. 20-22).

Job is in his thickest darkness. But now from that deepest gloom he makes a mighty leap into the light. He knows he will die, but he craves that his words may be engraved in enduring rock, with molten lead poured into the lines to preserve them forever. There they will stand after his death, a perpetual defense. But more! There arises in his soul the deep conviction that after his death, upon the very dust of his grave, a living person, God himself, will arise as his champion and vindicator. And he—yes, Job himself, in disembodied state—will behold God on his side and be aware of his vindication (vv. 23-27). The living God, a being who lives forever, will forever vindicate him. Here, in vv. 25-27, is one of the clearest intimations of immortality which the entire O. T. affords, and the passage makes an excellent basis for a pre-Easter or an Easter sermon on "The Immortality of the Soul." The closing line of v. 27 shows that Job was deeply stirred in his emotional nature by this spiritual insight which broke upon him as a great discovery. The chapter closes with the conviction that the friends will be punished by God for their persecutions of Job (vv. 28-29).

Reading 74: Job 20

ZOPHAR'S SECOND SPEECH

Job's last words left a sting in Zophar's spirit, for as he had listened he had been stirred to resentment at Job's sharp criticism of the friends (19:3). Now he cannot get words fast enough to express his hot thoughts (20:1-3)! He launches at once into the theme of his speech (vv. 4-11), that the prosperity of the wicked is short-lived. Note his description of how the wicked fall from prosperity (vv. 6-11). It is like a sudden transition from fame to dung,

from actuality to a dream world, from reality to a night vision, from living presence to nonexistence, from giving favors to seeking them, from wealth to poverty, from life to premature death. Wickedness *seems* sweet, like a piece of hard candy in the mouth, but when swallowed (when the deed is actually done) it is poisonous (vv. 12-14; see also v. 16). A wicked man eats up riches as a glutton gobbles up food, but God will make him vomit them up (v. 15). His destitution will be proportionate to his greed (vv. 17-22). Note the vivid picture in v. 22*a*. Here is the basis for a sermon on "Material Plenty but Spiritual Poverty." Feel the sarcastic irony of vv. 23-29. At the last the greed of the wicked man will be *satiated*—yes, with the judgments of God, calamity, lightning, hostility of heaven and earth, terrors, and material loss. The summary of his speech in v. 29, while it does not directly state that Job is the wicked man, by inference suggests exactly that.

Reading 75: Job 21

JOB'S SECOND REPLY TO ZOPHAR

Job does not continue on the high level he attained in his last speech (19:23-27). To his voluble friends he says, in effect, Let me have my say; then continue your derisive words (vv. 2-3). They have rebuked him for his impatience, but he has a right to complain; his condition horrifies him (vv. 4-6). Then he takes up the theme of his speech—why do the wicked prosper (vv. 7-16)? He pictures the career of the wicked: they have long life, bear children, enjoy safe homes, and live without pain; their cattle are healthy and they increase; their children are many and happy; they are prosperous to the end, then die quickly and without pain (vv. 7-12). To v. 13 the Greek translation of the O. T. adds "and they sleep in the repose of Hades." Yet they scoff in disdain at religion (vv. 14-15).

Moreover, Job continues, the wicked are free from calamity (vv. 17-21). We should preface the thought of v. 19*b* with "I say." Job's friends say that if a wicked man does not suffer his children will. But Job says, let God recompense the wicked man *himself* that *he* may know it.

Again Job maintains that the theory as to God's providential order of things which the friends hold is not true to the facts. The lot of men, Job affirms, is not in proportion to their differences in character (vv. 22-26). There is no distinction in fate between the righteous and the wicked.

The friends say that the house of the tyrant ("prince," v. 28) has vanished, but Job insists that men of wide experience, who have traveled far and seen much, give as their considered judgment that the evil man is *spared* (note margin) in the day of calamity, and is led away (in safety) in the day of wrath (vv. 29-30). The wicked man because of his power receives the homage of men in life, and is buried in honor when he dies (vv. 31-32). His successors keep his memory alive (vv. 33). Job feels that he has shattered the arguments of his friends (v. 34).

Reading 76: Job 22

ELIPHAZ' THIRD SPEECH

The third cycle begins. The friends, now unable to advance any new arguments, descend to personal censure and openly charge Job with sins. In sharp, clear accusations Eliphaz maintains that God would not afflict a man because he is *religious;* he has punished Job because of his sins, for his wickedness is great (vv. 4-5). Then Eliphaz attempts a catalogue of Job's sins (vv. 6-9)! Note the nature of these sins which he *must* have committed. The suffering which Job is now experiencing is the direct result (note "therefore") of these sins (vv. 10-11). Note how calamity is here represented as closing in on Job.

Eliphaz goes further, proceeding from Job's acts to his attitudes (vv. 12-20). He represents Job as saying that God in his high heaven cannot see what he does (vv. 12-14). Eliphaz dissociates himself from scoffers and skeptics, even though from appearances it may seem that God is dealing generously with them (vv. 15-18). In the downfall of the wicked, with whom Eliphaz infers Job has associated himself, Eliphaz sees the fact of God's moral order (vv. 19, 20).

So Eliphaz proceeds to exhort Job to make himself right with God (vv. 21-25). It is in itself a fine passage which is appropriate for the minister's own personal heart-searching. It is also an excellent basis for a sermon. First, there is the general summons to acquaintanceship with God (v. 21). This is followed by four exhortations (vv. 22-25): (1) receive instruction (note margin); (2) return to the Almighty; (3) put away social unrighteousness; (4) fling away material treasure—"gold of Ophir"—and make God your basis of security. Eight promises conditional upon sincere repentance follow (vv. 26-30).

Written Work.—Write out an outline of a sermon on the subject "How May I Enter into Acquaintanceship with God?" basing it on vv. 21-25. Put in your own words the eight promises that will be carried out in the life of the truly repentant man. Take this message into your own soul.

Reading 77: Job 23–24

JOB'S THIRD REPLY TO ELIPHAZ

In his baffled misery Job cries out for God (vv. 2-7). Note his truly classical utterance of the soul's quest for God (v. 3). Here is the basis for a sermon on "The Cry of the Soul for God," or "What and Where Is God?" Job now passionately desires to confront God, carrying with him his case, all carefully set in order like a lawyer's brief. He is convinced that God will listen to him (vv. 2-7). But,

alas, he cannot find God and so cannot confront him. Feel the poignancy and power of the classic lines of vv. 8-9, as on all sides he looks for God but finds him not. Yet he is confident—sense the wonder of this thought—that God has found *him,* that he sees and knows Job and what he is experiencing. Indeed God is intentionally eluding him, he thinks, to test and to purify his faith, for Job has lived in utter loyalty to God (vv. 10-12). This is a rich section from the standpoint of practical religious helpfulness. There is in vv. 8-10 a sermon on "Knowing or Known by God." There is in v. 10 another on "In Life's Testing Experiences." There is in vv. 11-12 yet another on "Living Faithfully When the Sense of God Is Dim." Although Job slumps back from this high plane (vv. 13-17), his thought of God has lost its harshness and he never sinks so low in skepticism or bitterness as before.

Ch. 24 is one of the most significant chapters in the book, for it gives us vivid glimpses of the social outlook of the sages and shows how deeply they had drunk at the springs of the great pioneer prophets, Amos, Isaiah, and Micah. Job is keenly sensitive to the unsocial conduct of men whose violence goes unchecked, there being no Judgment Day (24:1). He mentions land grabbers who remove the ancient landmarks and plunder the flocks of another (v. 2; see Deut. 19:14), driving away, probably as security for debt, the ass and ox of helpless people, possessions that stand between them and want (v. 3). In vv. 5-8 he paints the solemnizing picture of the struggle of the poor nameless outcasts who, homeless and unprotected, eke out a niggardly existence. In vv. 10-11 he transports us to the farms and vineyards, where we see hungry men carrying food and thirsty men treading out the wine. He seems to hear the groans of the poor from the heart of congested cities, but God remains unmoved (v. 12; see Isa. 22:5 for "a crying to the mountains"). He pictures the "night

birds," criminals who shun the day for their iniquitous work, who, as Job says, "rebel against the light." These are the murderer, the adulterer, and the thief (vv. 13-17). We should preface vv. 18-21 by "Ye say"; Job's friends assert that swiftly the wicked perish and their work issues in failure. But this Job flatly rejects, and maintains (preface vv. 22-25 by "I say") that, to the contrary, ruthless, evil men live in security to full maturity, then die quickly and with no pain; and he challenges anyone to prove him a liar.

Reading 78: Job 25–26

BILDAD'S THIRD SPEECH

There has been a disarrangement of the rest of this cycle. Already Eliphaz, the oldest of the friends, has charged Job with minimizing the knowledge of God (22:13). Now, in verses which probably made up the third speech of Bildad, the latter ironically taunts Job. In effect he sarcastically asks him (26:2-3): How hast thou helped him (God) who—as *thou* sayest—is without power? How hast thou counseled him (God) who—*as thou sayest*—hath no wisdom? One thing which Job lacked was humility before the mighty God. How small the haughty Job really was before him!

Thus Bildad, awed by the majesty of God (25:2-3), thinks it impossible for any mere man to be accepted by him as pure (vv. 4-6), and in pictures of rare poetic skill portrays that majestic power of God as revealed in the underworld (26:5-6), in the northern heavens (vv. 7-11), and in creation (vv. 12-13). He concludes in a verse of "nervous brevity and sublimity" that is unapproached anywhere in the book (v. 14). Yet the majestic power of God compares to the *fullness* of his wisdom as does a whisper to thunder! In v. 14 is the theme for a sermon which would focus attention upon God and which might be called, after the title of a book by Dr. George A. Gordon, "Aspects of the Infinite Mystery."

Reading 79: Job 27:1-6, 11-12

JOB'S THIRD ANSWER TO BILDAD

With a solemn oath, over against the accusations of his friends, Job maintains his integrity (vv. 2-4). Read with the margin in v. 4: "My lips *do* not speak, . . . neither *doth* my tongue utter." He feels that God has dealt unjustly with him and has embittered his soul. In vv. 5-6 we are granted a glimpse into the innermost sincerity of Job's spirit. (For vv. 7-10 see next *Reading*.)

Job declares he will teach his friends how God actually treats the righteous and the unrighteous, although they ought not to need instruction, for the facts stare them in the face (vv. 11-12).

Reading 80: Job 27:7-10, 13-23

ZOPHAR'S THIRD SPEECH

Most interpreters maintain that the three cycles were originally complete and that the above sections do not belong in the speech of Job but rather compose the third speech of Zophar. Zophar is convinced that the wicked man experiences a disastrous fate and can only wish that the fortune of his enemy be as that of the wicked (v. 7). The wicked man has no claim on God, he says (vv. 8-10). Wicked men may have children, but through war, famine, or pestilence they will come to a premature death (vv. 14-15). The money and possessions of a wicked man will at length go to the righteous (vv. 16-17). Note the vivid picture of the collapse of his seemingly strong house (v. 18). One day he will lie down in his wealth, and it will be for the last time (v. 19). Zophar pictures the horror of the wicked man's end, as amid the raucous and malicious delight of men he is stormed and flooded out of life (vv. 20-23).

For Job 28 see *Reading* 84.

Reading 81: Job 29

JOB'S FORMER PROSPERITY

Job's last speech in the debate (chs. 29-31) is more a soliloquy than a reply to Zophar. The friends are largely left at the side; and even as the debate had begun in a lamenting soliloquy, so it now ends in a similar intense and feelingful defense of his whole life. In the mood of solemn lament Job vividly paints the picture of his former prosperity. Note the elements that had composed his earlier happiness. Feel the play upon light and darkness in v. 3 and recall the similar type of thought, with the emphasis upon the darkness, in his opening lament in ch. 3. Feel the warmth, consideration, and tenderness of God toward him in those earlier days (vv. 2-5). Sense the poignancy of his realization of God's friendship and presence then, now but a precious memory. He was surrounded both by divine and by human affection. Note the interesting metaphors in which his prosperity and his material success are portrayed (v. 6).

How did young men and elderly men treat him (vv. 7-8)? How did the young princes and nobles act in his presence? Why did men see him and listen to him with such approbation (vv. 11-12)? Feel the force of v. 14 as read with the marginal reference, "clothed itself with me." There is here a helpful sermon on "Mediating to Others the Blessing of God." Notice the beauty of v. 14. Observe the social quality of Job's piety—his interest in the blind, lame, needy, and the stranger who had a rightful claim and needed a champion (vv. 15-16). How fearless and courageous he had been against the greedy oppressor (v. 17)! In those days he had had no other thought but living to old age and dying among his own in dignity and contentment (vv. 18-20). What does Job mean in v. 22? Feel how conscious he was in those days of the reverence and respect with which men

listened to him (vv. 21-23). Picture the confidence of his smile which their pessimism could not erase from his features (v. 24). Note the place he occupied among them in those good old days (v. 25).

Reading 82: Job 30

THE PAINFUL CONTRAST OF THE PRESENT

Job's speech continues. The opening words of the chapter, "But now," introduce the awful contrast of his present condition with those idyllic days of yore. Now children of ignoble parentage deride and mock him. In vv. 3-8, in a passage that reminds us vividly of 24:5-8, he pictures these degenerate and wretched outcasts. Shriveled up in appearance, they devour the broom roots which they gather on the steppe, and eat saltwort found under the bushes. Because of their thievery, when they draw near civilized dwellings they are driven away and pursued. They live in gloomy valleys and caves, miserable people of base birth, and they bring forth children of like low moral status.

It is these very outcasts, the scum of the earth, that now hurl indignities at Job, even spitting in his face (vv. 9-10). In vv. 11-15 it is the hosts of misfortune that seem to be attacking Job; and they, so Job thinks, are sent by God. Job's spirit is now very low (v. 16). Day and night he is in misery and in great bodily pain. In vv. 16-18 we get additional glimpses of the nature of his physical malady. And all this pain, so he thinks, has God as its source (v. 19).

Pitiable is his state as he cries out to God but receives no answer, as he stands up and is greeted by God's cold stare. Indeed, God seems to him cruel and ruthless, even persecuting him, making him, as it were, the sport of the whirlwind and howling storm (vv. 20-22). Death can be the only issue of his suffering (v. 23). In his desolation he stretches out his hand as though to ease his fall. He cries for help

even from his undiscerning friends (v. 24). He has wept because of the pain of others (v. 25), but now all his hopes are blighted. Instead of good has come evil, darkness instead of light. Inwardly and outwardly he is in misery (vv. 26-27). Blackened by his disease (see margin for v. 28), he cries for help, and in his mourning lament feels himself akin to the howling jackals and the crying ostriches. Again, in v. 30, revolting aspects of his disease are pictured. The joyous music of earlier days has been displaced by the wailing of a mourner (v. 31).

Reading 83: Job 31

JOB'S DEFENSE OF HIS PAST LIFE

Job now enters upon a noble defense of his character and conduct through the days of the past up until now. This passage is excellent source material for the ethical standards of the sages of Israel. He opens his defense by maintaining that his dealings with young women have been in purity of mind and in reverence for womanhood. There is a fine basis for a sermon to young men on "Reverence for Womanhood," based on v. 1. Note especially the phrase, "a covenant with mine eyes." The eye is here considered as the inlet, the gateway, of all that affects the life. Thus Job's eyes were made to obey his mind: not only was there no impurity in his *dealings* with young women, there was no impurity in his *glance* at them. He likewise was deterred from any impure conduct by the conviction that calamity would come as a result of it, sent by the God who marks man's steps (vv. 3-4).

At v. 5 begins the section where, in solemn oaths to be executed by God against him in case he is guilty on any count, he clears his name. He maintains his innocence of falsehood (i.e., vanity; v. 5). He has not coveted what was not his (v. 7). He has not been guilty of the blackest

sensual sin, adultery (vv. 9-12). How deeply he sees into the enormity of this crime and its physical consequences in sterility (v. 11). For similar views of the sages, see Prov. 6:27-35; 5:8-14; and 7:26-27. He has not abused his power by treating with contempt his male or female servants when they had a grievance (vv. 13-15). Notice the fine democracy of v. 15, based on the fact that master and slave alike are creatures of God. Here is possible a sermon on the subject "Abolishing Class Distinctions." He denies that he has been indifferent to the wants of the unprotected in society, the widow, or the fatherless. Feel the force of the thought that "the eyes of the widow" have lighted with hope as they looked to Job for help. To these unprotected in society he has not refused food or clothing (vv. 16-20). Sense the imaginative touch as he thinks of these needy ones warmed with the fleece of his sheep (v. 20)! He has not violently wronged anyone, even though, because of his position and power, he might have secured the protection of the judges. Before the majesty of God, Job, a man of power, did not abuse that power (vv. 21-23). He has not made an idol of his wealth (vv. 24-25). He has not, as an idolater, made obeisance to the sun or moon, thus playing false with God (vv. 26-28).

Feel the relative nobility, as over against many of the psalms, of v. 29. Job has not rejoiced or exulted over the misfortune of another. He represents his servants as boasting that he has ever been hospitable (vv. 31-32); the stranger and the traveler are specially mentioned as recipients of his hospitality. He has not, as mankind generally do (follow the margin for v. 33), concealed any iniquitous thing of which he was ashamed, so he has had no fear when mingling with the multitude. Nor has he been afraid of the contempt of the great families; so he has spoken his mind freely and mingled fearlessly with men (vv. 33-35). In v. 34 is basis for a helpful sermon on "Throttled by the

Fear of Men." He has not come into possession of his property by any violence or unjust seizure.

At vv. 35-37, which—as the climax of the chapter—belong at the end, he longs to confront God. He would go before him, certain of the rightness of his cause, bearing the brief of his defense proudly like a prince.

Reading 84: Job 28

THE MYSTERY OF THE DIVINE WISDOM

This poem is best read after the debate between Job and the three friends, for it had originally no connection with the debate and was not even a part of the original work, probably originating in the mind of some sage other than the author of the book of Job. It is a brilliant and beautiful poem. It has four stanzas, each stanza beginning (originally) with the refrain now found in 28:12, 20.

The first stanza (vv. 1-6, originally preceded by the refrain) pictures human skill finding the treasures in the earth, silver and gold, iron and copper, and the opaque blue lapis lazuli stone. There is a sermon in v. 3 on "Pushing Back the Frontiers of Ignorance." Picture the miners leaving their fellow men as in trembling cages they descend into the bowels of the earth (vv. 4-5). Note the vivid contrast: on the surface of the earth the calm processes of agriculture (v. 5*a*), in the heart of the mine underneath the earth the blasting and the digging (v. 5*b*), both processes going on at the same time.

The second stanza (vv. 7-11, also originally preceded by the refrain) states that human skill finds the path to the earth's secret treasure, a path which neither birds with their keenness of sight nor powerful beasts can find. Note that vv. 9-11 picture how man persists through great difficulty in his effort to acquire treasure from the earth, mastering the flinty rock, binding up the waters at their source

so that they will not flood the mine (v. 11*a*), channeling out horizontal galleries leading into the mine (v. 10*a*), and missing no significant treasure.

The third stanza (vv. 12-19) tells us that in spite of all such brilliant knowledge and skill, wisdom is beyond man's ken. He does not know the way to wisdom (read the Greek translation of v. 13: "the way thereto" instead of "the price thereof"). The way is not to be found in the primeval deep from which the earth was created. Men who travel the sea do not find it there (v. 14). Men cannot purchase wisdom with gold or silver, with precious onyx or lapis lazuli. They cannot estimate its value in terms of gold or glass, corals or topaz from Ethiopia (vv. 15-19).

The fourth stanza (vv. 21-28) maintains that such wisdom is known to *God,* and has been known to him since creation. It is hid from all living beings, including the birds (v. 21). The underworld has but heard a rumor of it (v. 22). God, however, knows the way to it (vv. 23-24). Before creation took place, wisdom existed and was set up by God as a creative principle. It is mind, feeling, purposing (vv. 25-27; cf. Prov. 8:22f.).

Over against this conception of wisdom, and in contrast with it, God commends to man a *practical* wisdom *which is attainable* (v. 28). To man God says, It is your wisdom to fear me. Wisdom in man is ethical. It is man's *moral* response to that by which God regulates the physical world and the events of human life. There is possible a helpful baccalaureate sermon on "The Truly Educated Man," based on v. 28.

Reading 85: Job 33:14-28; 36:8-15

THE SPEECHES OF ELIHU

The speeches of Elihu represent the views of a considerably later thinker than the author of the poem. He is

probably correctly represented as a younger thinker (see 32:4) who was not satisfied with the three friends who, as he says, "had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job" (32:3). He expresses his thoughts in a single speech (32:6–37:24) which has four major themes: (1) chs. 32-33, "The Ground and Object of Suffering"; (2) ch. 34, "The Righteousness of God"; (3) ch. 35, "The Uses of Religion"; and (4) chs. 36-37, "The Divine Government." He proposes to contribute to the argument with wisdom beyond that of the friends (see 32:7-10). But it is only in one direction that he makes a distinct contribution. Suffering is God's way of instructing the sufferer, with a view to his repentance and consequent restoration.

In 33:14-28 Elihu, criticizing the attitude which he represents Job as having taken, tells him how God speaks to man. First, he speaks to him in "a dream," in "a vision of the night" (vv. 14-18). The purpose of the dream which God sends to man is to change his aim, to wean him away from pride and so to keep him alive by withholding him from deadly sin (vv. 17-18). By the medium of a dream God opens the ears of man to his teaching and makes his teaching both impressive and clear (v. 16).

Second, Elihu continues, God sends to the one he would instruct and influence severe bodily illness, which brings him very low, near to the doors of death (vv. 19-22). Then a heavenly interpreter, one who explains the providential dealings of God with his life, shows him his duty. The implication of v. 24 is that the man repents and returns to the path of right. For then it is that God is gracious to him and commands that he be delivered from his illness and his life be saved (v. 24). The man is then gradually restored to freshness and vigor like that of his youth (v. 25). He goes to the Temple in gratitude, and sings in a psalm of personal thanksgiving his experience of sin and the wonder of his forgiveness and restoration (vv. 26-28).

The same basic thought that suffering is for instruction is given again in 36:8-15. Elihu says affliction, discipline, chastening, is for instruction. It is a stimulus that awakens man to ponder his deeds and his sins (v. 9). Through affliction God opens his ear to instruction, and man hears God's call to return (v. 10). If man heeds it he will return to prosperity (vv. 11, 16). God opens the ear by adversity (v. 15, mg.).

How does Elihu's viewpoint harmonize with your own pastoral experience? Write in your notebook a paragraph on the mission of affliction as a divine discipline.

Reading 86: Job 38:1–40:2

GOD'S ANSWER OUT OF THE WHIRLWIND

Job's passionate desire to debate his case with God is now granted. Out of the whirlwind, God answers (38:1)! Chs. 38-39, which the student should read aloud, reach the loftiest heights of the poetical genius of the Hebrews. The words are intended, harsh as their tone seems at times, to bring Job to awed humility. He is confronted in 38:1-38 with mysteries in the world of physical nature which his mind cannot penetrate: creation (vv. 4-7), with its note of triumph sung by the morning stars and the heavenly hosts; the orderly control of the sea (vv. 8-11); the dawn of day (vv. 12-15); the fountains of the deep that form the sea (v. 16); and, below the recesses of the deep, Sheol, the realm of the dead, with its gates (v. 17). How broad is the earth, Job is asked, and where is the secret dwelling place of the mysterious physical essence of light and darkness (vv. 18-21)? Next the poet causes to pass in survey the treasuries of snow and hail (vv. 22-23); the route of light and wind (v. 24); the channels of the rain in the thunderstorm; the forked lightning that accompanies the thunder (v. 25); the rain on the desert waste (vv. 26-27); the

source of rain, dew, frost, and ice (vv. 28-30); the great constellations (vv. 31-33); clouds and rain, meteor (read with margin, v. 36); and other celestial marvels (vv. 34-38). Compare Mt. 6:30 for the thought implied.

In 38:39–39:40 Job is confronted with the marvels of God's provision in the animal world. Here are painted brilliant, unforgettable pictures—the lioness and her young (38:39-40), the raven (48:41), the wild goat (39:1-4), the untamable wild ass (vv. 5-8), the wild ox (vv. 9-12), and the ostrich (vv. 13-18). The poet gives us living views of the war horse impatient for the fray (vv. 19-25), the migratory hawk (v. 26), and the vulture swooping down upon carrion (vv. 26-30). Compare Mt. 6:26 for the implied thought in this section.

The speech of God culminates in a challenge (40:2). Will Job, the carping critic of God, still carry on the dispute? If he cannot explain these mysteries, what right has he to speak?

Reading 87: Job 40:3-5; 42:2-17

JOB'S HUMBLED RESPONSE, AND THE EPILOGUE

These mysteries of material and animate nature, as passed in review before Job by the Almighty, are clear evidence of the purposive, wise, and all-powerful Creator. They have awed proud Job to teachable silence (40:3-5). He humbly acknowledges the mystery of the divine power, and admits that he has uttered words that go beyond his real understanding (42:2-3). He confesses that hitherto he has spoken merely from traditional knowledge about God. But now in his own soul in firsthand experimental reality he has seen God (vv. 4-5). He still suffers pain, but God does not elude him. Job, now deeply repentant, is united with him in mystical fellowship.

The epilogue (42:7-17), as we have seen, is part of the

folk book upon which the poet based his work. In vv. 7-9 the three friends are censured by Jehovah because they have not spoken right concerning him. They are now commanded to offer an expiating sacrifice because of their great transgression, and this is to be accompanied by Job's intercession on their behalf. When Job prays for his friends, Jehovah turns his fortunes and restores his possessions twofold (vv. 10-12). Again surrounded by the seven sons and three daughters which were born to him, he lives to see his great-grandchildren, and dies an aged, prosperous man (vv. 13-17).

Written Work.—Outline briefly the suggestions toward a solution of the problem of suffering you have found in the book of Job. Outline also some values which the book of Job has for the pastor-preacher.

IX

PITH, POINT, AND PUNGENCY

Proverbs

THERE was a distinct class or school of "wise men" in Israel. Just as the priest functioned through the "Law," "direction," or "teaching," and the prophet through the "Word of Jehovah," so the instrument of the wise man, or sage, was "counsel," or "Wisdom" (Jer. 18:18). Egypt had its teachers of Wisdom who created a literature that dates from the third millennium B.C. The Wisdom of Ahikar, which had its affinities with the Babylonian-Assyrian literature, was known by the fifth century B.C. in Babylonia, Assyria, Syria, Palestine, and Greece. Edom was also famous for its wisdom (Obad. 8; Jer. 49:7). All this supports the opinion that the leaders of the Wisdom literature made up a school which was international in character. It is likely that the sages in Israel occupied high posts among their people as official ministers responsible to the governing power. Through their contact with state officials they lived in a wide intellectual world and were open to the influence of foreign currents of life and thought.

There are separate collections of proverbs discernible within this book. The first six verses form the title of the whole book. This passage, which opens with the words, "The Proverbs of Solomon the son of David, king of Israel," was attached by the final editor about 200 B.C. The first long discourse, 1:7–9:18, has as its theme "The fear of Jehovah [i.e., religion] is the chief part of wisdom" (1:7,

mg.; cf. 9:10). And there are, in addition, two separate collections attributed to Solomon: 10:1–22:16, "The Proverbs of Solomon"; and chs. 25-29, which begin: "These also are proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah the king of Judah copied out." Prov. 22:17–24:22 form a collection called "The Words of the Wise." Prov. 24:23-34 is entitled "These also are sayings of the wise." Prov. 30 is entitled (with mg.) "The words of Agur the son of Jakeh; of Massa." Prov. 31:1-9 is entitled (with mg.) "The words of Lemuel king of Massa, which his mother taught him." And the book closes with a poem on the virtuous housewife, Prov. 31:10-31.

It is possible and likely that there are some elements in the book that do go back to Solomon. It is more than likely that 10:1–22:16 contains many sayings from the pre-exilic period—that is, before 587 B.C. The section 22:17–23:12, likewise resting as it does upon an Egyptian book of Wisdom of pre-exilic date, may have had its origin before the exile. We may trust the title of chs. 25-29 as dating that section at about 700 B.C. Ch. 30 shows evidence of dependence on the book of Job, and so must be dated after 350 B.C. Ch. 31 likely dates from the postexilic period. The latest section of the book, chs. 1-9, dates from the third century B.C.

The wisdom of Proverbs is not speculative as is Greek wisdom, but practical. The "wise men" were not nationalists. They were interested in human life as such and, with penetrating insight and often in word pictures of amazing vitality, they analyzed human conduct in all areas of life, studying its motives and its outcome. Because of this emphasis in their work, the "interest in the eternal human," they are called "the humanists of Israel." Many of these proverbs are secular in origin. But they reach us at length from the hands of men to whom God is the supreme con-

cern and whose interest in wisdom is primarily ethical and religious.

Reading 88: Proverbs 1

Prov. 1:1-6 forms an introduction to the book as a whole, giving the general title, "The Proverbs of Solomon," and stating the purpose of the book. Summarize in your notebook in a brief paragraph what you consider the purpose of the book. How should this book affect wise men (v. 5)?

Note that v. 7, which gives a general definition of wisdom, is really the motto of the book of Proverbs. By "beginning" is probably meant "its choicest feature." At the same time the word suggests that there is a very close relationship between reverence for God and the realm of truth. Religion creates an attitude that makes the search for truth normal and genuine.

Usually the father-son relationship, expressed so often in Proverbs (see v. 8), indicates a regularly organized and maintained instruction system. Interpreters believe that as early as the third century B.C. there existed a definite class of teachers and that they formed a primitive organization like a school. But in this instance it is instruction of a son by parents which the sage has in mind. In vv. 8-9 there is the possibility of a helpful sermon to youth on the subject "When Youth Lends a Listening Ear."

In vv. 20-33 "Wisdom" is represented as a woman standing in a public place, crying in the mood of pessimism to those who have refused to heed her. Note how she cries alike to the simple minded, to scoffers, and to fools (v. 22). What kind of response did she meet (vv. 24-25)? Observe the consequences of the refusal to take heed of Wisdom's counsel (vv. 26-30). Scoffers have laughed in derision at Wisdom, but the time will come when suddenly calamity will engulf them. Then they will call desperately for Wisdom but will receive no answer. In v. 31 there is expressed

a moral law akin to the thought that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7). This fine introductory chapter ends with the emphasis upon another great moral law. A life that shuns Wisdom is self-destructive, while a life that heeds the call of Wisdom wins security, a quietness and a confidence that is free from fear (vv. 32-33). In climactic fashion the chapter ends on the plane of security and freedom from fear (v. 33), two qualities characteristic of the truly wise and sincerely religious life as viewed through the eyes of Hebrew thinkers.

Reading 89: Proverbs 2

The central theme of this chapter is the blessings that come from the pursuit of wisdom. See with the sage the nature of the process by means of which wisdom is acquired (vv. 1-4): the treasuring up of commandments, the listening to wisdom, the applying of the mind and heart so as to discern and understand, the searching for wisdom as though it were silver and hidden treasure. Feel the suggestiveness of these pictures. Think of what it would mean in our lives if we were thus to take religion seriously, for here is organized discipline of the mind and spirit worthy of that which is wisdom's main part. What will result if the search for wisdom is thus pursued (v. 5)? Where is the source of wisdom (vv. 5-6)? How does the wisdom that comes "out of his [Jehovah's] mouth" get into our human experience? Explain the sage's thought of wisdom as a shield and guard (vv. 7-8). What does the phrase "the fear of Jehovah" (v. 5) mean to you? Does "the knowledge of God" (v. 5) mean knowledge God gives or knowledge about God?

From v. 9 we see that wisdom is far more than a mere intellectual concept. What great elements does it include? Note how wisdom, knowledge, discretion, and understanding (vv. 10-11) are directly related to the process by which wisdom is acquired. From what will wisdom deliver him

who possesses it (vv. 12, 16, 20)? Note what the sage includes in his description of "the way of the evil man" (vv. 12-15). How will wisdom safeguard the morals of its possessor (vv. 16-19)? The reader will note, especially in chs. 1-9, a marked prominence given to the vice of licentiousness. Keeping in mind that these chapters are the latest part of the book and date from the third century B.C., what may we infer as regards the seriousness of this evil in Judean society at that time? By that time, it is well to remember, the Jews were widely dispersed through the world and had great centers in Alexandria and Antioch, as well as in Jerusalem. It was, moreover, the Greek period of Jewish history which saw in Jewish society a vigorous encroachment of the freedom of Greek culture and a consequent relaxing of the stern requirements of Hebrew morality. The clan life with its social restraints gave way increasingly to the new freedom achieved by the individual. Note the solemn warning of v. 19. The man who traffics in immorality dies. When he steps upon the pathway of unchastity he is headed for certain destruction. He who plays with immorality does not "attain unto the paths of life."

V. 20 attaches itself naturally to v. 9 and suggests that he who seeks wisdom may

> . . . walk in the way of good men,
> And keep the paths of the righteous.

Here in v. 20 is an excellent basis for a sermon on "A Worthy Life Ideal." Notice how ch. 2, like ch. 1, ends in the thought of the stability and permanence of the upright man but the insecurity of the wicked. In Hebrew the perfect man (v. 21) is the man of wholeness, soundness, integrity of character.

Reading 90: Proverbs 3

There are three sections in this chapter, each of which describes the blessings that come to those who pursue wisdom. The first (vv. 1-10) is the sage's admonition to his pupils to live in accordance with his instructions. In v. 1 we should follow the marginal reading "teaching" instead of "law." By what pictures does the sage suggest the importance of kindness and truth (v. 3)? Remember that these are great qualities which are given central importance by the prophets. One of the great classic utterances of the book is in vv. 5-7. Note the emphasis of dependence upon God. Man's intellect unillumined by God cannot be depended on for correct guidance. This is a striking testimony to come from one of the sages, to all of whom the intellectual had such great importance. In v. 6 the term rendered "acknowledge" is literally "know," in the sense of "to have intimate acquaintance with." It is not intellectual knowledge about God that the sage is emphasizing, but a knowledge that loves God, cares for him, and considers him of supreme importance for life. A person with such knowledge will find the hindrances of life's way removed and all his paths, all the areas of his conduct—in society, in political matters, in business, in religion—will be made "level," "smooth," and "plain."

How can we in a very practical way honor God, and what will be the material gain of such practical expression of our reverence for God (v. 9)?

In the second section (vv. 11-20) the major new idea is the chastening of God. The student of Job will recognize here the influence of Eliphaz (Job 4-5) and Elihu (Job 33) upon the sage in his conception of the suffering of a good man as intended for his chastening. Indeed, the sage goes further and says that God reproves whomsoever he loves. We are reminded of the words of Jesus in Jn. 15:2*b*. God's

reproof is like the gardener's cleansing or pruning of the vine. The purpose is constructive and creative. The sage, through vivid comparisons with the greatest known material values, magnifies the superior excellence of wisdom (vv. 13-18). It gives long life, wealth, and honor (v. 16). Note the similarity of 3:19-20 to 8:22-31.

The third section (vv. 21-35) has three major thoughts: (1) vv. 21-26, the security and peace of mind that wisdom gives; note especially v. 24 for its practical value; (2) vv. 27-31, the generosity that wisdom generates; and (3) vv. 32-35, Jehovah's dealing with the wise man in blessing and the wicked in imprecation.

Written Work.—Write a sermonette of two or three paragraphs on Prov. 3:6, taking careful note of the interpretation herewith appended. In the present translation of v. 6 there is possible a sermon on an important question in life today: "How May I Be Sure of the Guidance of God?" The sage gives one great condition, the acknowledgment of God, the taking of him into account in our deeds, aims, and motives. Then the inevitable result is that our lives will approximate what is right. The daily decisions which we make will be increasingly in accord with God's will. And this will be not a *reward* for taking God into account but an inevitable result. This passage contains, as it were, a law of life.

Reading 91: Proverbs 6

Ch. 6 is chosen for our reading because it is representative of Prov. 4–7. It begins with a warning based on prudence. The sage says, in effect, that a man is to be cautioned against going surety for another. It is a counsel of thrift, but not exactly of kindness! But we are to read it with the glint of humor that was in his eye as he pictured a man trying to escape the responsibility of a note he has signed, in great humility asking to be released from it, and when

freed feeling like a roe that has been missed by the hunter's bullet, or a bird that has escaped from a trap! In another classical warning against sloth the sage sends his disciples to the ants for the lesson of industry (vv. 6-11). Describe in your own words what he pictures in vv. 9-10. Who are the two ruffians who strip the sluggard (v. 11)? In vv. 12-15 there is a warning against mischievous talk and malicious gestures. What are the seven things which are hateful to Jehovah (vv. 16-19)? There is an opportunity to deal concretely with these sins in a sermon on some such subject as "Seven Deadly Sins," basing it on these verses.

In vv. 20-35 we have a vigorous and able grapple with the theme of immorality, to which again and again the sage returns. Note carefully the noble words of vv. 20-23. Read Deut. 6:4-9 and note the similarity in mood of the two passages. All of this exhortation is but preliminary to the main subject, with which he now deals. The sage lifts a solemn warning against having immoral relations with an adulteress, the wife of another man. He pictures her seductive wiles; her flattery, made all the more attractive because of the quaint touch of the foreign accent in her speech; her beauty; and the "come-hither" look in her eyes. Says the sage, she is a ruthless hunter for "the precious life" of youth. In vv. 27-28, a remarkable passage, the sage raises a rhetorical question. To have dealings with such a person is the most perilous "playing with fire."

Written Work.—Outline a sermon on "Playing with Fire," basing it on the above verses. There is a deep insight in v. 32. The adulterer is devoid of sense, for he is really destroying himself, his inner spirit, his honorable name, and his own physical life. The sage closes with the picture of the guilty youth suffering the anger and enraged jealousy of the husband of the adulteress.

Reading 92: Proverbs 8:1-21

We are aware of a vast change in atmosphere when we pass from ch. 7 to ch. 8. It is like passing from the heavy mists of the lowland, filled with grime and poisonous fumes, to the mountains that tower above the vapors of the valley and permit us to breathe the pure, bracing air of the heights. In Prov. 8:1-21 we have the "appeal of Wisdom." Wisdom is here personified. We speak of her in some such manner as we often speak of Truth. Wisdom is pictured as a lovely woman standing at the head of thoroughfares, on the roads, in the streets, beside gateways, and at the entry of the city. She stands where vast multitudes of people pass and where she may confront the simple rank and file of humanity with her appeal. Note that "men" and "sons of men" are synonymous. It is to all human beings that she calls. She mentions, however, in v. 5, two classes: (1) the simple—that is, the inexperienced, the uninstructed, the immature, and (2) the fools—that is, those stolid and dull people who act with no regard to moral truths. In vv. 6-9 Wisdom describes her qualities. What are her characteristics? How does the sage suggest the preciousness of Wisdom (vv. 10-11)? From the viewpoint of the sage, in what does the fear of Jehovah, or religion, consist (v. 13)?

At v. 14 a new emphasis begins. Wisdom, expressed in counsel, sound knowledge, understanding, and might, becomes an indwelling principle in the mind of just kings and righteous princes. And those who love wisdom and seek it diligently shall find it, and through possessing it will gain riches and honor (vv. 17-21).

Reading 93: Proverbs 8:22-36

This passage is unique. It contains the nearest approach to Greek thought in the entire O.T. The sage who wrote these words is definitely an Israelite, but he has a conception of the order of the world and the unity of the world

which has been influenced by Greek ideas. From his point of view Wisdom is a creature of Jehovah. It was Jehovah who formed Wisdom as the beginning of his creation (v. 22). "Way" here means procedure, performance—that is, what Jehovah did, his work of creation. This Wisdom is the highest conceivable intelligence, which was with God in his mighty works of creation and which directs human life.

We are here reminded of the N. T. passage which comes closest to Greek philosophy, the prologue to the fourth Gospel. Read Jn. 1:1-3, where the "Word" which was "in the beginning with God" is very similar to "Wisdom," which was formed by God as the beginning of his creation. Says this Christian thinker, who had been deeply influenced by Prov. 8:22f. and by Greek thought: "All things were made through him [i.e., "the Word"]; and without him was not anything made that hath been made" (Jn. 1:3). When Jehovah created the heavens, the sea, and the earth, Wisdom was present as God's master workman, a source of delight to God and delighting in God (vv. 27-31).

At v. 32 we are back on more distinctly O.T. ground again. Wisdom gives a concluding appeal. Note the beatitudes in vv. 32 and 34. Picture in your imagination v. 34. This verse offers a good basis for an address to a high school graduating class on the subject "Alert at the Gates of Wisdom." Set down in your notebook in your own words in a very few sentences your answer to this question: What does the concept of Wisdom include from the angle of this sage?

Reading 94: Proverbs 9

At ch. 9 the conception of Wisdom again changes. Wisdom is here a householder who, having built a permanent house and set up an efficient establishment, now makes a feast and sends forth her maids to broadcast her invitation to the feast she has provided. Her invitation is directed

particularly to the "simple"—that is, those who do not have ethical insight and self-directing power. Here the simple men are the natural hearers, the open-minded, and those who desperately need instruction. The simple-minded man who hears Wisdom call, heeds her invitation, and forsakes folly, will *live* (vv. 1-6). Feel the moral overtones of that word "live" as the sage considers it.

Now, sharply contrasted with the open, clear invitation of Wisdom, is the seduction of Folly (vv. 13-18). At v. 13 read with the margin "Folly" instead of "the foolish woman." Folly is likewise personified, but as a clamorous, noisy person. She, too, is in an open place where she has easy access to passers-by. She also addresses the simple, the ordinary wayfarers. She calls them to turn in to her. But her invitation is to secret, forbidden pleasures. "Stolen waters are sweet" is the theme of her appeal. Secret pleasures are the great pleasures, from her angle. But unfortunate indeed are those who are attracted by her invitation and duped by her appeal. Those who go into her house find themselves already virtually in the underworld of Sheol, the abode of the dead. For already by their very entrance into the house of Folly they are doomed. And the added tragedy is that, although they are doomed, they know it not. They think they are in a place that is very much alive. But they are as good as dead already!

Between these two contrasted pictures there is a passage (vv. 7-12) which likewise contrasts the scoffing at and disdaining of wise counsel, on the one hand, with the acceptance and following of it, upon the other. There is a fine statement on the right attitude for a student in v. 9. A wise man will profit by instruction. A righteous man, when he is taught, really increases in learning. Moreover, v. 9 hints at a broader meaning in wisdom than that hitherto encountered. It means also practical ability. It includes not

only knowledge but skill, expertness in workmanship, the result of closely following wise instruction.

Reading 95: Proverbs 10

We read ch. 10 as representative of Prov. 10–13. This chapter begins what was probably the original nucleus of the book of Proverbs and its oldest section (10:1–22:16). It was put together gradually and consists largely of separate sayings, wise and tested observations on life. In these sayings there is pith, point, and pungency, qualities which characterize the proverb. Here is also "shortness, sense, and salt" (Trench). There is, however, practically no connection of one saying with another. Here we see the revelation of God concerning our common life by means of truths homely and commonplace but often brilliantly and unforgettably stated. This section is composed of 376 independent proverbs, but we shall read only representative portions of it.

The main theme of ch. 10 is that the reward of goodness and industry is prosperity but that evil and laziness lead to misfortune. Note the form of each saying, wherein the second member of the verse is almost invariably contrasted with the first. The chapter opens with a fine utterance on the father-son relationship (v. 1). A great ideal of the sage is industry, and an intolerable attitude is sloth (vv. 4-5). A topic that is the burden of many proverbs is that of speech. Picture the vivid expression of the thought in v. 11, that what a righteous man says is like a fountain of living water, but what a wicked man says (note the margin) is like a screen that hides violent conduct. Moreover, wise men, sensitive to what words can do, are cautious in their speech, but fools through their careless speech are likely to bring down unmerited destruction upon people's heads (v. 13). The speech of a righteous man is comparable to choice silver (v. 20). Moreover, the words of a righteous man feed men. Feel the similarity in thought of the words

of Jesus as to that by which man's spirit lives (Mt. 4:4; cf. Deut. 8:3).

Another characteristic theme in Proverbs is that righteous living makes for stability and permanence (v. 25). Misfortune, like a whirlwind, sweeps away the wicked; but the righteous man is securely established on an enduring foundation. Moreover, righteous living makes for long life, while wickedness shortens the life span (v. 27). And as long as the righteous man lives he looks toward the end of his life with happy expectation, for it will have a joyous close. The wicked has no such hope (v. 28). We sense in v. 30 what possessing the soil of Palestine and living on the land meant to this sage—it was the symbol of the highest blessing of God.

There is a suggestion for a helpful and comforting address at the funeral service of a good man in v. 7*a* of this chapter on the theme "The Best Memorial Is a Good Character."

Reading 96: Proverbs 15

Ch. 15 is chosen as representative of Prov. 14–16. It opens with a world-famous proverb, the practice of which would greatly increase the co-operative spirit in the world and make for self-control (v. 1). There is a possible sermon, based on this verse, on "The Strength of Gentleness." We are again on the subject of speech, so close to the heart of the sage. Note that the utterance of the wise person is constructive (v. 2). As the original reading of this verse probably implies, his tongue "drips"—that is, dispenses knowledge. Soothing speech (note the margin) he compares to "a tree of life" (v. 4). The question of a father's discipline of his son also occupies an important place in the interest of the sage. It is a fool who feels superior to his father's teaching or correction (v. 5). We feel, in v. 8, how deep the prophetic criticism of sacrificial worship in Israel

has penetrated into the mind of the sage. Note the similarity of this thought with the noble insight of Psa. 51: 16-17. Observe, in vv. 9-10, the thought of life as a "way," so characteristic of biblical thinking. An important step toward a belief in immortality is made in v. 11, where the sage implies that the world of the dead (Sheol and Abaddon) is not shut away from God. But if God knows *this* realm he must all the more certainly know the hearts of living men (v. 11). We are reminded in v. 12 of the word of Socrates that the unexamined life is not worth living, for the sage knows how necessary to the wise man is honest, wise criticism. We are continually aware of that seasoned judgment on the part of sage that is the product of careful and continuous observation. Notice the triumph of a cheerful heart over affliction in v. 15. How needed in our day, with its love of luxury, is the wise judgment of vv. 16-17. A man may have little of material wealth, but if he has God he is far better off than the godless rich man, who is ever anxious about his material possessions. Anybody can have a dinner of herbs, even the poorest. Few can afford to serve a stall-fed ox, even in nonrationed days! But if love is present at the table herbs can be a veritable feast, and if hate is at the table the most delicious dish cannot bring joy. Feel the vividness and universality of such pictures. At v. 23 we are back on the subject of speech. An appropriate word spoken at the right time, how helpful and effective it is, and what joy it brings to the speaker as well as to the one addressed (v. 23)! The way to increase in understanding is through paying careful attention to honest criticism (vv. 31-32).

Reading 97: Proverbs 18

We read ch. 18 as representative of Prov. 17–19. The chapter opens with a strong community consciousness. In the sayings of the Jewish fathers, Hillel utters a word which

throws light upon the sage's meaning: "Separate not thyself from the congregation" by such counsel, he says, meaning, Do not separate yourself from the belief and custom of the community. It is a warning against always being on the off side and quarreling with the consensus of community judgment. What is your reaction to such counsel? What is its strength and what its weakness? In v. 4 it is evident that by "a man" the sage means "a wise man." Thus read, the verse gives an interesting and suggestive picture. The words of a wise man are a source of guidance, instruction, and inspiration as inexhaustible as are deep waters, a flowing brook, or a fountain. The emphasis is upon the deep sources of wisdom and character from which such words spring.

At v. 8 speech once again becomes the sage's theme; here he deals with the whispered morsel of precious but damnable gossip. Such slanderous words penetrate into the deep recesses of the soul of him who listens to them. One of the most searching comments on workmanship in this entire book, which gives such large place to the work of the world, is v. 9. A slack worker who is slothful or indolent, who loafs on his job and does not give work for value received, is comparable to a destroyer. His work really deals out destruction. It brings ruin to the man himself and to others as well.

There is a challenge for days like our own in v. 14, which speaks of times when a man's spirit is crushed. These are days that try men's souls. One recalls the similar challenge that came to the inner being of Jeremiah (see Jer. 12:5). The suggestion of the words of Jehovah was a challenge to the prophet to face life fearlessly and courageously, and it is the same in the thought of the sage. In v. 19 we seem to have a warning against offending another. When once a brother has been offended it is hard to win him back. A barrier comparable to the bars at the entrance to a castle

are thus erected between men. There is great need for this warning. The sage counsels us to treat our sensitive brother with patience, consideration, and with vision of the future wherein we must live with him. A good verse for husbands, and for young men who hope to become husbands, is v. 22. The idea is that he who finds a good wife finds good fortune and he should view that good fortune as a favor to him from God. It reminds us of the fine counsel of Marcus Dods in a letter to a young friend who had just been married to a good woman. He wrote to his young friend, "Treasure her as a gift from God!"

Reading 98: Proverbs 20

Representative of Prov. 20:1–22:16, the closing portion of the first collection of the Proverbs of Solomon, we read ch. 20. It opens with a timely counsel on temperance (v. 1). The counsel of quietness and compatibility is suggested in v. 3. The sluggard comes before us again in v. 4. After the last ingathering of crops, when it is time to plow and prepare the ground for the new sowing, the sluggard, because he is too lazy, does nothing, and consequently gets no harvest and is reduced to begging. We are aware at v. 9 of a deepening conviction in Judaism of the universality of sin. The whole field of commerce comes before us in v. 10, where the sage calls for honesty in weights and measures, a summons needed as much today as in the pre-exilic era of Palestine. Note the vivid picture in v. 14 of the buyer who "beats down" the storekeeper in his purchases, then goes away laughing in his sleeve and boasting to others of his cleverness! There is the picturesque basis here for a sermon on "Sincerity in Buying and Selling." Note the insincerity evidence in this verse, and compare it with v.23. V.11 offers a fine basis for a message to children entitled "What You Do Shows What You Are."

There is basis in v. 17 for a sermon on truthfulness with

the subject "When Bread in the Mouth Changes to Gravel." Beware of the gossip, warns the sage in v. 19. Honor thy father and thy mother, he counsels in v. 20. Throw yourself on God for his guidance and direction, he advises in v. 24. In v. 25 he insists upon great care in the making of a vow. If a man renounces ownership of something by declaring it sacred and giving it to the Temple, then regrets and questions the wisdom of his vow, and even takes it back, he is in grave danger of dealing unfairly with God and men. The author of Ecclesiastes had similar convictions about the vow (Eccl. 5:2, 4). In v. 27, the basis of a famous sermon by Phillips Brooks, the word "spirit" is practically equivalent to "conscience." Conscience is this higher life from God which animates all men and which performs the function of God's searchlight. There is a sermon here on "God's Candle in the Soul." There is in v. 29 a sermon on "The Glory of Young Men," dealing with the different kinds of strength characteristic of youth at its best.

Reading 99: Proverbs 22:17–23:14

The next large collection in the book of Proverbs is Prov. 22:17–24:34. In today's reading we shall confine ourselves to Prov. 22:17–23:14, a unique part of this collection in which it seems apparent that use has been made of an Egyptian book entitled *The Wisdom of Amenophis,* which, according to Gressmann, is dated about 700 B.C., and which certainly falls within the first four centuries of the first millennium B.C. The author of this book of Egyptian wisdom was Amenophis, son of Kanakht, an Egyptian officer, minister of agriculture. It is a book of moral instruction in the form of a father's advice to his son.

Near the end of this Egyptian work appear these words: "Examine these *thirty* chapters for thyself: they gladden, they instruct, they are the first of all books, they make the ignorant learned." The section for today's reading, after

a brief introduction (22:17-21), is made up of thirty distinct couplets of two lines each, and in that introduction, in the correct original reading of Prov. 22:20, there is a reference, similarly, to *thirty* sayings, where the sage asks.

> Have I not written for thee *thirty* sayings
> With counsels and knowledge?

It is likely that there is a connection between the "thirty chapters" in Amenophis' work and the thirty couplets in Prov. 22:22–24:22. There are twelve sayings composed of two verses each in today's reading. Ten of these are adapted from *The Wisdom of Amenophis.* The last one, Prov. 23: 12-14, comes from the *Sayings of Ahikar,* written in the Aramaic language on papyrus and found on the island of Elephantine in the Nile near Assuan. The Wisdom of Ahikar, as we have noted, has its affinities with the literature of Babylonia-Assyria.

It is thrilling to discover that these pithy sayings are found in other literatures as well as among the Hebrews. The Hebrews enhanced what they found. Even foreign proverbs they brought into the service of Jehovah. The whole collection, of which today's lesson is the larger part, has been suggestively designated "Home Truths."

Read the brief introduction to this section in Prov. 22: 17-21. What is the purpose of the sage who made this collection (vv. 19, 21)? Note the influence of the prophet Amos (Amos 5:15) in vv. 22f. The ruthless rich often encroached upon the property rights of the poor (v. 28; cf. 1 Kings 21:19 and Isa. 5:8). V. 29 is fine basis for a talk to a high school assembly on "Diligence in Work."

Prov. 23:1-2 offers good foundation for a talk on manners. To "put a knife to the throat" is a proverbial expression for self-restraint. A warning against wealth as a life motive may be given by a message on "The Wings of Wealth," based on v. 5. What attitude is taken in vv. 12-14

toward corporal punishment? This whole section has as its background of interest (as does the Egyptian book of Wisdom) youth who are about to launch upon careers of public office.

Reading 100: Proverbs 23:15–24:34

Prov. 23:15–24:22 stresses the high importance of wisdom (23:15f., 19; 24:3-7, 13-14). It likewise stresses the importance of heeding parental counsel (23:22-25). Distinctive in this section are the notes of warning against adultery (23:27-28), against envy (24:1-2), against joy at an enemy's downfall (24:17-20), and against drunkenness (23:20-21). In one of the most vivid and truthful word pictures in the book (23:29-35) the sage describes a man under the influence of intoxicating drink. In a single paragraph in your notebook write out in your own words what the passage portrays. Read it aloud. How can you make this picture live with unforgettable warning to today's youth?

A second collection of "words of the wise" in 24:23-34 forms a sort of appendix. The sage here warns against taking revenge upon a neighbor (vv. 28-29). How is 24:29 related to the Golden Rule? Read aloud the classic description of the sluggard's field in 24:30-34. How do you interpret v. 33? Feel the ironical humor in it. Note that in v. 34 the sluggard is directly addressed.

Written Work.—Outline a talk entitled "The Habitually Lazy," basing it on this passage and on Prov. 6:6-11. On the positive side you might point out the moral and religious value of honest and faithful work as service to men, as real service of God, and for the development of Christian character.

Reading 101: Proverbs 25

The next large collection in the book is prefaced: "These also are proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah

king of Judah copied out." It consists of chs. 25-29, with which we shall deal in the next three readings, choosing from this whole section chs. 25, 28, and 29.

Recent students have stressed the antiquity of the movement of life and thought that produced the Wisdom literature in Israel, and we can accept as basically accurate the date for this collection as about 700 B.C., in the time of Hezekiah. Ch. 25 is quite secular in tone. Set down in your notebook in outline what vv. 2-7*b* tell us about kings as the sage viewed them. Note how Jesus made use of vv. 6-7*b* in Lk. 14:7-11. Observe that v. 7*c* belongs with v. 8, reading "What thine eyes have seen, do not bring forth to the multitude hastily"—a word of caution regarding gossip. To what does the sage compare wise counsel (vv. 11-12)? Note that "apples of gold," and so forth, represent a beautiful work of art. Complete in your own words the following comparisons of vv. 13-14: a faithful messenger is like ———; a braggart is like ———; a boaster is like ———.

What is the point of v. 17? Note the vivid pictures in v. 19. What particular warning to the sensitive pastor is given in v. 20? (Cf. Rom. 12:15.) With vv. 21-22, compare Mt. 5:44 and Rom. 12:20. Did Jesus and Paul know Proverbs? Feel the basic truth of v. 23. How much harsh anger we could eliminate if our speech were more considerate and gracious to one another! Observe the picturesqueness of v. 24. Picture the man who has fled from his wife's quarrelsome tongue to a quiet corner in the attic! Apply v. 25 to letter writing to distant friends. How about that letter from a faraway friend whose heart leaps at the appearance of your familiar handwriting in an answer addressed to him? Feel the force of the vivid picture by which the sage interprets the tragedy of a moral fall on the part of a hitherto good man v. 26). In v. 28 there is an excellent basis for a needed sermon on "Self-Control." Compare the converse of this and the more positive statement of the principle in 16:32.

Reading 102: Proverbs 28

As compared with chs. 25-27, chs. 28-29 are more strongly ethical and religious in tone. "The Boldness of a Good Conscience" is the subject of a sermon that might be based on v. 1. The theme of v. 6 is "Honest Poverty." V. 8 strikes at the acquisitive instinct of the man who feels no responsibility to the needy poor. In v. 9 there is a good illustration of "When Prayer Is Futile" (cf. Isa. 1:15). There is the heart of a sermon on "The Rebound of a Deed" in v. 10. "The Spirit of Sincere Repentance" may be the subject of a Lenten sermon based on v. 13. Observe that in v. 14 "the man that feareth alway" means the man who stands constantly in dread *of sin* and its consequent punishment. Feel the force of v. 16: the political leader who lacks the knowledge for which his position calls is really a great oppressor. The familiar counsel of industry is in v. 19. A sermon on "There Is a Right Way to Get Ahead" may be based on v. 20. The familiar sin and curse of the Orient—the bribe, or, as the East calls it, "the squeeze"—is dealt with in v. 21. Note the fine statement of the fact that sincere and needed rebuke is preferable to flattery, even to the one rebuked (v. 23). Compare 28:24 with Mk. 7:11-12. "Trust in Self or in God" is the subject of v. 26. In these words we are constantly faced with the remarkable vision of social responsibility which the sages lifted to new importance (v. 27).

Reading 103: Proverbs 29

How do you take criticism or rebuke (see v. 1)? Feel the truthfulness of the observation in v. 2 when applied to political leadership. Sense the profligacy of the type of youth pictured in v. 3. Picture the vivid description of the flatterer in v. 5. Observe the lighthearted gladness of the righteous man. In his life there is a radiance (v. 6). There

is in him a sense of social responsibility toward the needy in his community (v. 7). The danger which an outspoken righteous man faces in a corrupt society is suggested in v. 10. A fine picture of self-control under severe provocation is given in v. 11. It seems that vv. 12-14 clearly imply the existence of the kingdom of Judah, and so must certainly have been written before 587 B.C., when the Jewish state fell. The sage was clearly an advocate of the stern discipline of children (v. 15). There is a basic optimism implied in v. 16*b*. The desirability of the strict discipline of children is again emphasized in v. 17. Note in v. 18 the two great ways whereby Jehovah reveals his will to his people. V. 18 of the A.V. reads "the people perish," while the A.S.V. puts it "the people cast off restraint."

The implication of v. 19 is that a servant can be corrected only by the rod. What would you say in reaction to this point of view? In v. 20 the thought is that haste is the opposite of the spirit of calm, thoughtful reflection. In v. 23 there is in the Hebrew a play upon the words "low" and "lowly" which is well reproduced in the verse as rendered in the A.S.V. There is a fine sermonic possibility in v. 25 for the subject "Men-Fearers or God-Trusters." In v. 26 there is a suggestive criticism of immoral, cringing reliance on human political power rather than on conscience and principle. There is possible a sermon based on this verse on the subject "Cringing Before Men or Reliance upon God." The chapter closes with the thought that while the unrighteous man is a problem to the righteous, from another point of view the righteous man is a problem to the wicked (v. 27)!

Written Work.—Outline carefully a sermon on "The Power of Vision," basing it on Prov. 29:18 and explaining carefully the meaning of the verse. Include two or three illustrations of how "vision" keeps men constructively under restraint.

Reading 104: Proverbs 30-31

Another collection within the book is Prov. 30, entitled "The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, of Massa" (with margin). Massa was a tribe which was situated between Edom and Arabia (see Gen. 25:14). Agur was evidently a sage of the late, reflective period of Judaism. He spoke these words to Ithiel and Ucal, most likely two ancient sages. Agur's words are "the confessions of a skeptic" who does not understand God and who stands awed before the mystery of Jehovah's creation (vv. 1-4). In vv. 5-6, in spite of his recognition of mystery, what does he exhort his readers to do? Vv. 7-9 are a prayer. For what does he ask God? All except vv. 5-9 in this collection are secular proverbs. After a word condemning the slander of a servant, the author deals with four classes of vicious men (vv. 10-14). The term "generation" means a class or a circle of men. What four classes are designated? For these four classes, see respectively, Prov. 20:20; 20:9; 6:17; and 1:11. What four things does he enumerate in vv. 15*b*-16 that can never be satisfied? What happens to the eye of the son who insults his father (v. 17)? What are the four mysterious things (vv. 18-20)? What are the four intolerable things (vv. 21-23)? What are the four little but wise animals (vv. 24-28)? What are the four stately things (vv. 29-31)? Note that most of these proverbs are numerical; see also Prov. 6:16-19.

Prov. 31:1-9 is a collection entitled "The words of Lemuel king of Massa, which his mother taught him" (with mg.). It forms a manual for kings or judges. It is of very late date. It warns against sensuality and immoderate drinking of wine (vv. 2-7) and calls upon the reader to champion the cause of the needy. Why is the counselor opposed to drinking wine (v. 5)?

Read aloud vv. 10-31, noting that this passage is an acrostic alphabetic poem, the finest in the entire O.T. It describes the ideal wife, and has been called the "Golden ABC" of the perfect wife. After praising her in general terms, it describes her industrial pursuits (vv. 10-15). What do we learn from this as to a Palestinian household? How characterize her as a financier (vv. 16-18)? How estimate her skill as a provider (vv. 19-22)? What is the community estimate of her (vv. 23-24)? What is the nature of her wisdom, and how prosperous is she (vv. 25-27)? What do the members of her family think of her (vv. 28-29)? Put the laudatory summary, vv. 30-31, in your own words.

Written Work.—Write out in a careful paragraph or two your estimate of the value of the book of Proverbs for today's life. Give concrete illustrations.

X

THE CONFESSIONS OF A REVERENT SKEPTIC

Ecclesiastes

THE term "Ecclesiastes" is the Greek word (in its Latinized form) for the Hebrew title *Koheleth.* This title is a feminine noun connected with the root idea of "assembly." It indicates that the author speaks as the *representative of wisdom* and not as an ordinary man. Often in the literature of the sages Wisdom is personified as a woman (see Prov. 8). Similarly, here it is Wisdom as she reveals herself in the assemblages of men. Solomon, reputed for his wisdom, is used by the author as a mouthpiece as he speaks, not to the intimate circle of those already initiated into the secrets of wisdom, but to the rank and file, the multitudes of men. Thus the author, a sage or philosopher who lived in Jerusalem about 200 B.C., lets this wisdom for the multitudes speak, as it were, *through* Solomon; but Solomon himself is not to be viewed as the author.

The book is largely autobiographical. The author was a Jew who had come in contact with Hellenism. Accordingly, in him two great streams of thought are united, orthodox Judaism and Hellenism. Reared though he was in Judaism, he had grown, through experience and observation, skeptical of the accepted religious views of his people. The cold facts of life seemed to him to clash with these views. He had enough acquaintance with Hellenism to be inclined

to penetrate behind the accepted opinions of his fellow Jews, to test their worth, and to reach new and sometimes radical views. He was one of the original thinkers of the O. T.: he made a fresh approach to life, and with a deep insight he perceived truth. In intellectual temper he was closer to the author of the book of Job than to the author of Proverbs. His book is largely confessional in nature.

The date which is suggested for this book, about 200 B.C., rests upon the fact that the language in which it is expressed shows strong Aramaic influence such as marked the Hebrew of that time. Moreover, it is probable that this book was known to Jesus the son of Sirach, author of the book of Ecclesiasticus in the Apocrypha, about 180 B.C., the greatest work of Hebrew Wisdom outside the O. T.

Reading 105: Ecclesiastes 1:1–2:17

Eccl. 1:2-11 is a prologue to the whole book. The theme of the book is here expressed. Set down in your notebook in your own words the thought of v. 3, which is the best single verse for the theme. Likewise set down in your own words what the author means by v. 2. Does he believe in progress? What processes in nature fascinate him? Is there to him such a thing as a new idea? Is there possible to him such a thing as history?

In Eccl. 1:12–2:17 the author demonstrates his thesis, telling of experiments he undertook in order to find the highest happiness in life. To what realm did he first turn in search of life's chief good (vv. 12-18)? Note how the author here impersonates King Solomon. For "madness and folly" in 1:17 the Greek translation, which is probably correct, reads "parables and science." How did he come out in this first experiment?

To what realm did he next turn (2:1-11)? Note the various ways in which he sought enjoyment (vv. 3-10). What was the outcome of his second series of experiments (v. 11)?

Sense his vivid contrast: the wise man with his eyes in his head, the fool walking in darkness (v. 14). Does this ancient sage believe in a life after death (v. 16)? Meditate a moment on that tragic sentence "So I hated life" (v. 17). What was lacking in his efforts toward happiness?

Reading 106: Ecclesiastes 2:18–3:22

This section and the following, chs. 4-6, deal with the preacher's third quest for happinesss, through work and wealth. Together they present eight obstacles to the finding of happiness in this area. Three of them are dealt with in today's reading. What, in a word, was the outcome of this third quest (v. 18)? Meditate on the sentence "I hated all my labor." Set down in your notebook what you think it is that should make work a happy experience. What is the first obstacle he encountered as he attempted to find joy in his work (v. 18)? What would you answer to a man who expressed this obstacle to happiness in work? How high was this man's ideal of workmanship (v. 21)? Put 2:23 in your own words. In the light of this obstacle what does he conclude is best for him to do (v. 24)? So far as v. 24 goes, it offers a high ideal of life.

Read aloud, so as to catch its literary quality, 3:1-15. According to this passage, upon what does success in business depend (see *ABC*, p. 617)? Note the fourteen couplets in which the author lists the various forms of human activity (vv. 1-8) and read the passage aloud. A sermon is possible on "Eternity in the Heart," based upon 3:11. He sets eternity over against time. We feel in this verse how the very unrest of soul which the sage is experiencing is itself an evidence that he is a creature not of time but of eternity. There are elements in life that defy analysis, that leave us confronting mystery. Observe the counsel which he so often gives, that enjoyment of the material values of life is itself a gift of God (vv. 12-13). The second ob-

stacle to finding the highest good in work is the fact that man's actions have not the least influence upon God. All man can do is to stand in fear before God (v. 14).

What was the third obstacle he encountered (3:16-22)? What results from his comparison of man with beasts (vv. 19-21)? It is significant that he thinks of the *possibility* that man's spirit "goeth upward," that somehow it may partake of God. Put in your own words his concluding counsel (v. 22).

Written Work.—Outline carefully and fully a sermon on "Finding Joy in Our Work," on the basis of Eccl. 2:24. Note how v. 26 seems to represent a more orthodox view than that usual to the author.

Reading 107: Ecclesiastes 4:1–6:12

This section gives us obstacles four to eight which stand in the way of his finding happiness through labor and wealth. What is the fourth obstacle (4:1-3)? From 4:1, how would you estimate the social quality of the sage's mind? Feel the pessimism of vv. 2-3 and sense the similarity of the thought to Job 3:1-10.

The fifth obstacle to happiness (4:4-6) is rivalry and competition and the mood of envy they arouse. The author believes, however, that idleness is just as bad (v. 5). What does he say is the wiser policy in contrast to rivalry and competition (v. 6)? Do you feel that rivalry and competition in business are evils, or attitudes to be encouraged? Outline a sermon on "The Spirit of Contentment," basing it on 4:6.

The sixth obstacle to happiness through wealth rests on the simple observation that riches do not bring satisfaction. Describe the miser, as pictured in 4:8. Through what pictures does he illustrate his belief in the values of companionship, noting that "a man" in v. 12 means "a robber" (vv. 9-12)? What is your impression as to the feeling of

loneliness of this ancient thinker (v. 10)? For 4:13-16 see *ABC*, p. 618. Observe that this historical episode illustrates the sixth obstacle.

What does 5:1 teach as regards the reverence of the author? What importance does he attach to vows (5:2-7)? Outline a sermon for the closing Sunday of the old year or for the first Sunday of the new year on the subject "Sincerity in New Year Resolutions," basing it on 5:4-7. Note Moffatt's illuminating rendering of vv. 6-7. How great is this sage's sense of the responsibility of political leaders to God (vv. 8-9; "one higher than the high" is God)? The thought of 4:9-12—the sixth obstacle—is continued in 5:10-12. There is a sermonic possibility in 5:12 with the title "The Blessedness of Sleep."

What is the seventh obstacle to the finding of happiness by amassing wealth (vv. 13-17)? Note the quotation from Job 1:21 in v. 15. There is a sermonic possibility in 5:18-20 on the theme "Accepting and Enjoying Life as a Gift from God."

What is the eighth obstacle to the finding of happiness through wealth (6:1-6)? Do you think this sage has any conception whatever of life beyond the grave (v. 12)?

Reading 108: Ecclesiastes 7:1–9:1

Eccl. 7:1-6 emphasizes the wisdom of a sober view of life. There is an interesting play upon words in v. 1—which may be reproduced in English, "A good name is better than nard" (see *ABC*, p. 619)—where *shem* (name) and *shemen* (nard, oil) are contrasted. What is the author's relative estimate of the value of mourning and sorrow on the one hand, and feasting and laughter upon the other? Is it true that sadness "does the soul good" (v. 4)? What figure of speech does the writer use to describe the noisy singing revelry of fools (vv. 5-6)? Put in your own words the searching message to judges contained in v. 7, to which

verse rightly belongs, as introduction, the preceding words, "This also is vanity." Over against impatience, hasty anger, and the idealization of the past, he emphasizes the value of patience and the spirit of contentment (vv. 8-10). Observe the fine statement that "Wisdom is a defense" (v. 12). Accept as from the hand of God, he says, both prosperity and calamity (vv. 13-14). In vv. 15-22 we have the doctrine of "the golden mean," that is, the counsel of moderation in all things. In vv. 23-29 he may possibly refer to a disillusioning experience he has had in relation to some woman (v. 26). How did he proceed in his search for wisdom (vv. 23-25, 27)? Has his search now ceased (v. 28)? What definite things has he discovered (vv. 28-29)?

In 8:1 is a striking word about what wisdom does to the physical features. The theme of 8:2-9 is, in general, obedience to rulers. We are aware in these verses of the atmosphere of tyranny. For the particular tyranny hinted at, see *ABC,* p. 619. In 8:10-11 the author insists that the righteous and wicked are not dealt with as they deserve. Observe the fine statement of his conviction that religious living is worth while (vv. 12-13). Note that v. 12 contains a germ of belief in some kind of after life and in the reality of God's final justice. Since righteous and wicked men are not, in his judgment, suitably rewarded, what is his counsel (vv. 14-15)? Do you consider this counsel wise? Outline a sermon of encouragement to loyalty on the theme "It Shall Be Well," basing it on 8:12. What is his conclusion as to what man may expect from God (9:1)?

Reading 109: Ecclesiastes 9:2–10:20

What is the theme of Eccl. 9:2-3? What relative value is there in just being alive (9:4-6)? Does he here suggest any hope in an after life? What then is his counsel to his fellow men (9:7-10)? How significant do you consider his counsel in 9:10? In 9:11-16 the theme is that reward is

uncertain and the time of death, while sure to come, is unknown to man. What does the episode given in 9:13-16 teach?

In 9:17–10:3 are a number of proverbial sayings about wisdom. There are many sermon possibilities here: in 9:17, "The Quiet Power of True Wisdom"; in 9:18, "The Strategic Weapons of the Mind"; in 10:1, "When a Moral Fault Destroys the Influence of a Wise Mind." In 10:4-7 the author shows how true wisdom will conduct itself in the presence of freakish rulers. There is the possibility of a sermon to young men in 10:7 under the title "Slaves on Horseback and Princes on Foot," in which youth of princely qualities might be challenged to the kind of lives they have it in them to achieve. In 10:8-11 he lists some dangers to which workmen of various sorts are exposed. In 10:12-15 he emphasizes the silliness of fools. In 10:16-20 he contrasts weak kings with those nobly born and pictures the relative strength of their rules. It is possible that the reference in v. 16 is to Ptolemy Epiphanes, who in 203 B.C., at about five years of age, became king of Egypt (which controlled Palestine). There is an opportunity for a sermon appropriate to a time when political leaders are about to assume office, based on 10:17, on the theme, "Noble Statesmen and National Well-being." And there is possible a picturesque character-building sermon to young people on "Sinking Rafters and Leaky Roofs," based on 10:18.

Reading 110: Ecclesiastes 11:1–12:14

In Eccl. 11:1-3 the sage recommends to his readers the spirit of benevolence. See *ABC,* p. 620, for comment on the sowing of seeds upon the waters of irrigation. Along with benevolence is commended generosity, the giving to many (v. 2). The motive, however, is self-centered. Compare, for a similar motive of prudence, Lk. 16:9. Such returns from

the conduct of a generous person are as dependable as the laws that we observe in nature (v. 3).

There is in Eccl. 11:4-6 a practical counsel to the overcautious. If one should wait to do anything until conditions are just right he would never start. There is much mystery in life, and we cannot fully understand God's dealings with us any more than we can understand the wind, or the way in which a body is fashioned in the womb. Accordingly, the sage counsels us to work strenuously throughout each day from early morning until evening and take philosophically whatever results from our labor.

In vv. 7-8 these miscellaneous maxims come to an end with the counsel to enjoy every day as it comes, lighted by the "sweet" light from the sun, even unto old age. It should deepen this joy in life to remember, by way of contrast, that many days of darkness in the abode of the dead are the only future that one can expect.

Such preliminary thoughts lead to the most striking section of the book, Eccl. 11:9–12:8. The sage counsels his readers to rejoice in their youth (11:9-10) before age with its infirmities comes. In the light of 11:9, what age group did he have particularly in mind as he wrote? What are the two most significant verbs in 11:9–12:1? What is there in youth which should be the cause of rejoicing? Set down in your notebook a comment on Wordsworth's familiar lines:

> Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
> But to be young was very Heaven!

Notice that in 12:1 the sage suggests how taking God into account in youth colors even old age with blessings. How does the sage characterize the period of youth (12:1)? In vv. 2-8 he uses the gradual failing of the physical faculties of an elderly man to describe the approach of old age. How does old age feel as regards the joy of life in the

aging years? The power of "come back," so characteristic of youth, is gone. Instead of the sky's clearing of clouds after a rainfall, the clouds gather again (v. 2). In vv. 3-6 the sage, in poetic, figurative words, describes the breakup of the physical body (see *ABC,* p. 621, for comment on the instructive details). Observe that the climax of his description is in v. 7, where the two elements in life, the physical and the spiritual, are distinguished. Does the author believe in the immortality of the soul? The author's own pessimistic conclusion to his investigations is given in v. 8.

There are two appendices to the book of Ecclesiastes. The first comes from one who was greatly interested in the author and in his teaching and commended the book as both stimulating and strengthening (vv. 9-11). The second is from one who, because of their unsettling character, warns the reader against such words as the book contains and commends what he believes to be the whole duty of man. In what, according to his summary, does human duty consist (v. 13)? What is the reason which he attaches to the doing of this duty (v. 14)? There are fine practical uses to which this reading can be put. There is possible (1) a sermon on "The Importance of Religion to Youth," basing it on 12:1; (2) a talk to Sunday school teachers on "Sharp Goads and Well-driven Nails," basing it on 12:11; (3) a sermon on "What Is the Whole Duty of Man?" basing it on 12:13; and (4) a sermon on "Working for the Eyes of God," basing it on 12:14.

Written Work.—Outline carefully a sermon based on the last clause of Eccl. 11:9 on the subject "When Youth Lives in Responsibility to God." Note how the sage glorifies not youth in itself but youth lived for the eyes of God.

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